



SEPTEMBER 2008 ACTIVITIES

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

* Herb Study Group - **Literature Grows in the Garden** hosted by Susan Firth

**Monthly MG Meeting - Social starts at 10:30AM

Guest Speaker Marlene Gillman **Beauty Beyond the Windows**

President's Corner

Submitted by David Fitch

This has been a very eventful month. It all started at the Board meeting last month during a discussion about vacant seats on the Greenhouse committee. It seemed in our best interest to convene a small group of involved members to explore ways to attract folks to the open seats. The subject of the conversation at that meeting quickly changed from filling the slots to changing the focus of the Greenhouse. It appeared that there is a growing concern emanating from the contention that the operation of the Greenhouse has become production oriented. This opposed to an orientation toward education. The two are not mutually exclusive but it was believed that the spotlight was on production to the exclusion or detriment of education. Given that our corporate mission statement clearly points us in the direction of education, a need for a change in direction became apparent. Therefore, a decision was made to explore what steps would be necessary to change the operation of the Greenhouse as well as what the impact of those changes would be on the overall organization and the Greenhouse.

For those of you who were able to attend the August monthly membership meeting, you will recall that I presented most of this information at that time. For those of you who were not able to attend, let me briefly tell you about the meeting. We tried a new format. I referred to as a "Town Hall" meeting. In place of the more traditional program format, we held an open discussion with an emphasis on two topics. The topics were; (1) the Successes that the BCMGA has had to date; and, (2) the Challenges that we face. I for one was very pleased with the open responses and discussion that evolved. We captured a list of items under each heading. Interestingly, the central point of all of the comments was aimed squarely at two issues. Those being education and communication.

I had a meeting with Dirk where we were able to discuss the significance and impact of the Greenhouse and Town Hall meetings. We decided the time is right to put together a Strategic Planning Committee. The purpose of the committee will be to evaluate the current strengths and weaknesses of the Association, assess the viable opportunities, and explore new horizons in order to develop a comprehensive and achievable long range strategic plan that is within the scope of the mission statement as defined in the Corporate By-Laws. The primary focus of the committee's efforts will be directed in the

areas of Finance, Education, Communication and Use of our Physical Plant. One of the committee's specific goals will be to examine the issues relating to the Greenhouse operation that I discussed earlier in this writing. The committee will also hold up as a "yardstick" the directions we were given at the Town Hall meeting.

Today the Board had an opportunity to discuss all of these issues at length. At the end, there was unanimous agreement that we are on the correct path and, furthermore, that we are taking the right steps to assure that we stay on the correct path. My intention is to have a final plan to present to the Board at the November meeting.

I understand that there are and/or will be some concerns among the membership regarding the steps we are beginning to explore. Please be assured that we are not rushing into any posture or position. All avenues will be explored thoroughly by the most knowledgeable and experienced talent in our membership. We will also be looking outside of ourselves to other MGAs who have had similar experiences or are in similar circumstances. And, we are always cognizant of the financial burden surrounding the mere presence of the greenhouse.

I am really excited about what I see ahead for BCMGA. The education opportunities and new experiences for members and the public are endless. It will open new doors for our new member class program. It will allow members to be creative in developing new displays of plants and planting methods. We'll have expanded and functional displays of composting, rain water collection, patio gardening, container gardening, deer resistant techniques, earth kind landscaping, herb presentations.....the list goes on and on.

Stay tuned in. You are going to be very excited and proud of what your Association will accomplish in 2009.

Please feel free to contact me or Dirk for any further or additional information.

Last night we had three small zucchini for dinner that were grown within fifty feet of our back door. I estimate they cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$371.49 each. - Andy Rooney

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ASSN
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

Submitted by Beverly Wickersham, Secretary

July 23, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Fitch, Rae Schmuck, Mel Meyers, Ursula Nanna, Judy Herrmann, Annette Ensing, Jeanette Karr, Raymond Marr, Don Wyatt, Beverly Wickersham, Dirk Aaron
GUESTS: Charles Newsom

The regular meeting of the Bell County Master Gardeners Association was called to order at 9:01 a.m., Wednesday, July 23, 2008, by the president. The secretary was present.

The minutes of the June 25 meeting were approved as read.

Treasurer's Report

David Fitch, in the absence of the treasurer, presented two reports: The Balance Sheet listed the Total Assets of the Bell County Master Gardeners Association as \$17,882.88, consisting primarily of cash. President Fitch suggested that a breakdown of the assets into allocation accounts would help to clarify which funds are dedicated and which are available for operation expenses. The Profit & Loss report itemized Ordinary Income/Expense of the Association. Ursula Nanna moved to accept the treasurer's report. It was placed on file.

Greenhouse Report

Don Wyatt reported that the top three positions of the Greenhouse Committee (Chairperson, Production Coordinator, and Greenhouse Manager) were yet to be filled. The certified people are doing the majority of the work. More manpower is needed. Emphasis should be placed on recruiting new class volunteers and other members for specific greenhouse duties. It was agreed that a master plan for each area be developed. Also reported: 400 plants were ruined by rodents.

Corresponding Secretary Report

Annette Ensing reported on several areas:

Correspondence: A congratulations card was sent to Bill Welch for his Garden Club of America Award.

Webmaster: Deb Martin has agreed to continue as webmaster. A meeting will be scheduled to work on expanding the web. Current information on the

website reflects the upcoming vegetable and herb sale and the latest tree threat—the Soapberry Borer.

Newsletter: The Blooming Bell was published on July 2. Joan Hinshaw is the editor.

Publicity: Linda Young will be the new chair of the Publicity Committee. The committee will consist of Gail Christian and Kim Youngblood plus two photographers. Mary Lew Quesinberry will mentor them. Linda has meetings scheduled with Mary Lew and Carla Tomaka to gather needed information. She will handle this upcoming sale herself, but will schedule a committee meeting to set up a calendar of events with suspense and a tentative plan of action.

Handbook: Jan Anderson and Jane Capen are currently at work on the Handbook.

Newspaper Articles: Candy Mullen checks for length and accuracy before sending the article to Dirk Aaron for a fact check.

Ask a Master Gardener: Judy Herrmann reported that several questions have been received from readers. The questions are referred to and answered by the author of the "Tip of the Week" article.

Grants: No coordinator found as of this date.

New Class Report: Jeanette Karr reported that Fran Shepard will be the New Class Coordinator. A Co-chairman will be assigned at a later date. Also on the New Class Committee are Bernie Hurta, Mentor Coordinator, and Mary Ann Everett, Director. The committee will begin organizing efforts in August.

Garden Tours: Rae Schmuck reported that only three gardens have been volunteered for the Fall Tour. The suggestion was made to have only a Spring Tour this year, and in the future year alternate between a Spring and a Fall Garden Tour instead of having both tours each year. An additional suggestion was to concentrate on a specific area of Bell County for each tour. For example, the Killeen/Harker Heights gardens might comprise the Spring Tour and Temple/Belton gardens would be on the Fall Tour. Another suggestion included dividing the two areas by geographical location and offering a "split ticket" choice. Those participating in the tour would pay only for the area they visited. Adding the Greenhouse, Herb, Vegetable, and Handicapped Gardens to the Temple tour was also suggested. This addition would provide excellent "teaching" opportunity. No action was taken.

New Business

Based on a report by Dirk Aaron concerning the large quantity of paper consumed each year (40-50 cases), Judy Herrmann moved to give a check in the amount of \$400 to pay for the use of paper required by the Master Gardener Association. The motion received a second. The motion was adopted. The motion was immediately amended to read "to pay for office supplies." The amendment received a second and was adopted.

In other business, Dirk recommended that the \$4,000 fund provided by the Professional Groundskeepers Task Force be held in stewardship by the Bell County Master Gardener Association Board of Directors. Mel Meyers moved that the BCMGA Board of Directors accept the responsibility of the \$4,000 fund provided by the Task Force for the design and implementation of the Earthkind/Demonstration Garden. The motion was seconded and was adopted.

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:45.

Burger Wednesday September 3rd

Submitted by Karla Tomaka

Chef Nolan is going to be cooking up Cajun-style chicken for us. If you can bring a side dish, dessert, or drinks, please email Karla Tomaka at kstomaka@aol.com. The project for the day is final preparations for our second veggie sale on September 6th (8:00-1:00). The sign-up sheet for the vegetable sale is hanging up in the greenhouse on the bulletin board. We still need some customer service volunteers and someone to help Gary with the *Ask a Master Gardener* Booth. If you have an extra wagon you're willing to loan us, please bring it Wednesday.

What was paradise, but a garden full of vegetables and herbs and pleasure? Nothing there but delights.

- William Lawson

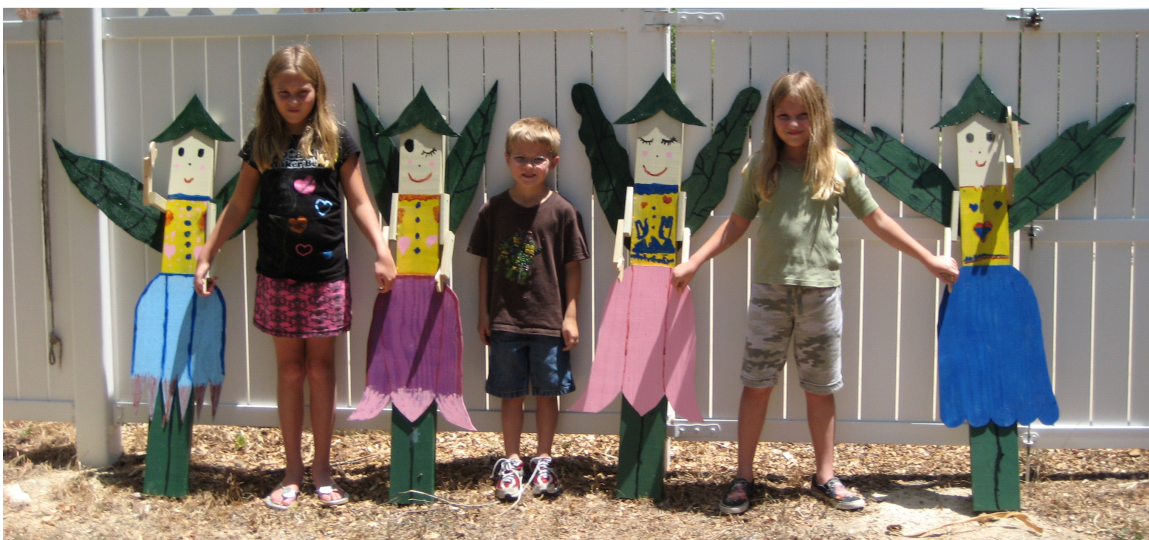
Flower Fairies -

A Garden Woodworking Project for Kids

Submitted by Annette Ensing

I took care of three grandchildren for several weeks this summer, and tried to devise projects that teach and are fun to do. A project this year was flower fairies. They look forward to doing things in my woodworking shop, and have become proficient with some power tools (with my hand on or near by) as well as hand tools. A bench scroller saw was used for most of the cutting – even the 5 ½ year old can do this, and it's great for eye-hand coordination. They get their share of measuring, drilling, nailing, sanding and screw driving, too --- and lots of painting.

The flower fairies are built from 4' treated pine 2x6s and ¼" plywood. They learned the parts of plants and different characteristics to design their fairies. The stem became legs, the sepal became a hat, the petals became a skirt, and the leaves became wings. The shirt was painted yellow, since "most plants have yellow centers". The shirt decoration was to represent pollen, but kids and a paint brush get carried away. They named their flowers, so we could "put the wings on Tulip", etc. We didn't aim for exact replication of a specific plant, but that could be done. Plans for next year are to add root "feet", replacing the 1x2 arms utilizing some joinery lessons, and making the hands become buds. We'd like to make vine "hair" but haven't figured that out yet. The flower fairies are tied to fence posts in my garden, and bring a smile when I recall the fun they had making them.



Plant Sale September 6th

Submitted by Linda Young

The Bell County Master Gardener Association vegetable sale is from 8 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. September 6, 2008 at the Greenhouse on 1605 North Main Street in Belton. Featured vegetables are pickling and slicing cucumbers, squash, cauliflower, broccoli and cabbage. Also offered will be rock roses, ornamental peppers, figs and etc. Come early as there are a limited number of Texas-sized tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers available. For more information, go to our website at: <http://bell-tx.tamu.edu/> and click on "Bell County Master Gardner".

"Ask a Master Gardener Booth" will be provided to answer your gardening questions. To contact a Master Gardener, e-mail ask.bcmga@gmail.com. And don't forget to mark your calendar for our perennial sale on October 11th.

Herb Study Group

Galangal, Lemon Grass, Kaffir Lime

Submitted by Terrie Hahn

Hope everyone enjoyed this month's herb study meeting. For those who couldn't come, we missed you. Here is a summary of the herbs studied along with what Allie used them in. There is also a recipe for mango sticky rice which Allie (Terrie's daughter and Thai chef) had almost every day for breakfast when in Thailand.

We talked about Galangal, called Kah in Thai, which is in the ginger family. Most sites I read said you could substitute ginger for galangal, but the chef Allie studied with said they substitute lemon grass. Ginger would be a very different taste. We passed around a piece of galangal to look at - it looked like ginger, but did not have the heavy skin and was creamy in color. There are several types of galangal, different types grown in different areas of Asia. You can grow it here as you would ginger. It's cultivated in California and Florida, but will probably taste different from Thai galangal because of the different soil.

You can find galangal in Asian food markets - choose thinner roots if they have them.

Galangal has similar medicinal properties to ginger. It helps the digestive system keeping bowels regular and easing nausea. Historically, medieval European medical people wore the dried root as a protection against evil and as an enhancer of virility.

Allie used galangal in her curry pastes and slices of it in the coconut chicken soup. She found out the hard way in Thailand that you push it aside in the soup and don't eat it - it's rather nasty to chew up - extremely hot.

Next we talked about Lemon Grass. We have some growing in the herb gardens outside. I cut some out for Allie to use and found out the grass is very sharp. I also found out that you need to cut it all the way to the root. The part that is used is the white part right above the root. Use only the dense multilayered part up to about an inch before the grass blades start. Peel off the loose outer layers. Allie used this in her curry pastes and the soup. As with galangal in the soup, Thai people usually push the pieces of lemon grass aside. Sometimes they chew on them for a while, but the pieces are too tough to eat.

Most Thai herbs get their intense flavor from an intense environment. Hence, if you live in a milder climate, the flavors of these herbs will be milder. When cooking, go by taste rather than rigidly following a recipe.

Medicinal properties include treatment of colds, flus, indigestion, fatigue, back pain and yeast infections. Its essential oils are reputed to contain a substance similar to insulin.

According to Lucinda Hutson, lemon grass likes sun, but prefers a little afternoon shade. She digs up her clump before the first frost, divides them out and replants the pieces she keeps in the spring. Kim said that we shouldn't cut them back until spring; if we leave them in the ground, they'll have a better chance of surviving the cold. According to Lucinda Hutson, you can freeze the few inches of lemon grass stalks that you use or store in the fridge in a paper bag. Other sources have said that they should be wrapped in plastic in the fridge which makes more sense to me.

We next spoke briefly about Kaffir Lime. Frances Idoux had a Kaffir Lime plant which she shared with Allie for the curries and to top the soup. The thick leaves are very interesting in that it looks as if one leaf is attached to another at the tip of the leaf. The limes it produces are very knobby. The zest is used more than the actual lime. You really can't smell the leaf until you start cutting it into small strips and it then smells like a combination of lime, lemon and mandarin. Dried leaves may be used in soup the way one would use a bay leaf. But for other dishes, substitute other citrus leaves. Allie substituted lime balm before we got hold of Frances' leaves.

Medicinally, Kaffir leaves are used for indigestion. They are used in shampoos and invigorate the scalp. The

lime has been used as a natural bleach to remove tough stains. Lucinda Hutson calls this plant Makrut. She says the plants are hard to find, and very costly. They cost a lot because they are very difficult to propagate. She suggests using #3 rooting powder in a light potting medium and misting frequently. They must be overwintered indoors or in a greenhouse. They like sun with afternoon shade and like regular water and light fish emulsion feedings. They should get 8 - 10 feet high.

My sources of info were Lucinda Hutson's The Garden Cookbook, About.com, thaifoodandtravel.com and theepicentre.com

Here's the Mango Sticky Rice recipe:

Approximately 400 grams sticky rice (cooked) buy at Asian grocers
1/2 C coconut milk
1 T butter
4-5 T palm sugar
1 T roasted sesame seed, unculled (We couldn't find these so left them out. Allie tried regular sesame seeds and didn't like them.)
1-2 ripe mangos, cut

Add coconut milk, butter, sugar and boil until palm sugar melts. Add sesame seeds. Pour sauce over rice in individual bowls, place cut up mangos on top and serve.

Thanks to everyone who came and listened and tasted. Allie had a good time talking about her adventures and practicing Thai cooking.

The Gardener's Morning

The robin's song at daybreak
Is a clarion call to me. Get up and get out in the garden,
For the morning hours flee.

I cannot resist the summons,
What earnest gardener could?
For the golden hours of morning
Get into the gardener's blood.

The magic spell is upon me,
I'm glad that I did not wait;
For life's at its best in the morning,
As you pass through the garden gate.
- Howard Dolf

Ruellia--A Plant to Love or Hate

Submitted by Jane Capen

As I walked through my garden this morning, I noticed a lot of Ruellia. This is a plant with which I have a real love/hate relationship, at least the tall variety, often known as Mexican Petunia. On one hand I think the blueish purple color is wonderful. It thrives even if neglected, and is not bothered by most pests or diseases. Ruellia blooms well in August, when many other plants just look tired. What's not to love about a plant like that?

Well, how about that it's invasive? Not only invasive, it is hard to pull up. The roots go deep and cling stubbornly. Spreading by both rhizomes and seeds, Ruellia can crowd out other plants.

In the spring, when the weather was nice and I was feeling fresh and all ready for garden work, I pulled up numerous Ruellia. Now that it is in the upper 90's, I just let them live. They do add nice color. I will hate myself for this later, but not until the weather cools.

So what is this plant's history? Does it really come from Mexico? I did a bit of research. According to Floridata.com *Ruellia brittoniana* (or *Ruellia caerulea* Morong) is in the family acanthaceae. It comes from Mexico, and has spread through much of the southern US. The native form can reach three feet in height, has leaves 6-12 inches long and 1/2 -3/4 inches wide. Flowers last for one day only, but it is a profuse bloomer. While it prefers moist, reasonably fertile soil, it is not really that picky, and will grow under some very adverse conditions. It is best toward the back of the garden. According to the article, it can also be grown inside, in a very sunny window.

Don't confuse the tall Ruellia with its more well behaved cousin, "Katie", the dwarf ruellia that may be purple, pink or white. Growing in nice little clumps, "Katie" is on the Texas superstar list of plants. It is only about 12 inches high and is lovely at the front of a bed or even in a container.

So if you have native Ruellia this year, enjoy it, and be assured that you will have even more of it next year.

References:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/cemap/ruellia/ruellia.htm>
<http://www.floridata.com/ref/R/ruellia.cfm>
<http://plants.usda.gov/java/ClassificationServlet?source=profile&symbol=RUCA19&display=31>

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Final Reminder - 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.

Contributors: David Fitch, Frances Idoux, Beverly Wickersham, Karla Tomaka, Annette Ensing, Linda Young, Terrie Hahn, Jane Capen, Mary Lew Quesinberry

Editor: Joan Hinshaw

Please submit articles for *The Blooming Bell* to Joan at irene_joan@hotmail.com

Having fun in the Garden

A passel of pigs running for cover in the Quesinberry garden.

