



BCMGA Newsletter

February 2008

February Calendar

13 – BCMGA

18 – 19 Landscape Design Course,
Bryan/College Station

20 – Greenhouse Meeting

23,24 – Bell County Home and Garden
Show, Expo Center

27 – BCMGA Board meeting

President's Corner

Even though I always enjoy the holiday season, I am also glad to see it end. I like to look upon winter as a time to sit back and do inside things rather than work outside on my plants. In this respect, it has been a good winter for me, but the recent cold weather has not made it easy for our Association.

The greenhouse crew and students have been busy preparing for the spring sales. This has included starting the vegetables from seed. To germinate, the seeds require temperatures above 65 degrees. This means we must not let the temperature in the greenhouse drop below 70 degrees. When it does, the propane heaters must run to maintain the temperature. They have been doing a lot of that this winter, fostered by the long periods of cloudy days. How much has the propane needed to keep the greenhouse warm been costing us? It has been costing us about \$300 a week. When days are sunny, the greenhouse will heat up during daylight hours even when outside temperatures are low. When it is

cloudy or nighttime, the heaters run most of the time.

The heat loss problem has been accentuated by air leaks in the plastic roof. Normally, the greenhouse roof plastic has an inner and outer skin that is separated by an air space that provides insulation and conserves heat. With the air leaks, the inner and outer skins have not been separated by an air space and, hence, the greenhouse has had no insulation.

What can we do about this drain in our finances besides praying for sunshine? DJ and Mel Myers have just finished repairing the larger leaks in the outer skin. This should reestablish the airspace between the layers of the roof and reduce our heat-loss due to conduction. We are currently discussing some method of shrouding the seed tables with plastic to give them their own microenvironment. This would allow the seed tables to be more efficiently heated to foster germination. At the same time, this would enable us to keep the greenhouse itself at a lower temperature, reducing our propane usage.

There has been some talk of installing some type of solar heating system. The literature on solar heating suggests that energy expenditures can be reduced up to 70% using this technique. Since the time for spring is quickly drawing

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near, this may be something to consider in the future, but it is too late to reap much benefit from it this year.

The good news is that our water use has reduced itself drastically since our over-watering problem was discovered. No one knows how this happened, but the automatic irrigation timer had been set to water the turf twice daily. Turf needs no more than 1 inch of water per week to be green and healthy. I think we were using 7 inches daily – and having to pay for it. Currently the automatic system is off. When the time is proper, it will be set to deliver 1 inch of water per week in no more than 2 increments. If we get 1 inch of rain during any given week, it should be turned off for the rest of that week. In the future, we plan to plant roses in the area between the extension office and Main Street. When that happens, the sprinkler heads can be converted to drip lines and the usage of water should plummet.

Greenhouse Donations:

I want to personally thank those of you that have donated to our Benevolent Greenhouse Maintenance Fund. So far we have collected a total of \$1130 from our members. You can rest assured that this will be used wisely. These donations have come from about 18% of our certified members. Since we are a non-profit, charitable association, and thus donations to this fund are deductible from your income tax, we would like to encourage the other 82% of you to participate. If you have not given to

the fund and would like to participate, send your donation or pledge to our treasurer, Dr. Judy Herrmann at 941 Rattlesnake Road, Harker Heights, 76548. If you wish to deduct your donation, ask her to email you a receipt.

Super Gardening Book Still

Available:

We also will continue to sell Doug Welch's excellent gardening book for at least 2 more months. If you have not had the opportunity to see it, or if you would like to purchase a copy, contact me. The Association is receiving half of the proceeds for the sales. Each book sells for \$25.00. Half of this is donated back to the Association.

Greenhouse Financial Needs:

The Board of Directors has applied for a grant from E.J. Carpenter to meet the greenhouse financial needs. If we are successful in obtaining the grant, the money will be used to upgrade the greenhouse into the twenty-first century. It will not be used for maintenance and utilities. We should know if our application is successful sometime in the next 90 days.

Change in Greenhouse Personnel:

Just after Christmas, Annette Ensing tendered her resignation as Production Manager of the greenhouse. While she will continue to help us with some of the greenhouse bookkeeping functions, two excellent horticulturists, Ken Richey and Don Wyeth, will assume her duties as Production Manager. Karla will continue to be the

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Greenhouse Manager, Lawrence will continue to be the Greenhouse Committee Chairperson, and Gary Slanga will continue to be our Entomologist and Pest Manager.

Other Activities:

The Association has been busy with doing day programs for several of the local schools. Mary Ann Everett needs Master Gardeners to help with the programs. If you are interested in helping, be sure to let her know of your interest.

Watch your emails. The greenhouse crew will be asking for cuttings of various plants that can be propagated in the greenhouse. Recent requests have been for roses, but this will change with the seasons. Bringing material for cuttings is an excellent way of supporting your Master Gardener Association.

Other:

Did you notice the article in the Temple Telegram today? California farmers are getting more money selling their water than they get growing crops. The importance of rainwater harvesting just grows and grows.

Gy Okeson
President BCMGA

Tip of the Week Update

Here is an update on our "Tip of the Week" writing project. As you know we are supplying both Temple Daily Telegram and Killeen Daily Herald newspapers with our "tips" articles. The "tips" appear in the Friday

edition of the Temple paper and the Saturday edition of the Killeen paper. We have been supplying tips for the Killeen Daily Telegram since October 2007 and the Temple Daily Telegram since December 2007.

Candy needs material for spring and summer and fall. Send your 300 word article to Candy now- even if it is more suitable for another season. Send your article to Candy Mullen (candylane@taptrain.com). Try to include a photo if you can. If you have questions contact Dirk Aaron (254 933-5305) or Candy Mullen(254 698-2304).

We need articles. This is a way to educate thousands of people in our Bell County community each week. Hope to see your by-line in the paper soon!

Deborah Martin has set up an "ask-a-master gardener" e-mail account on our web site. Judy Herrmann is monitoring this e-mail account. In the article you write include: contact master gardeners at ask.bcmga@gmail.com.

H&G Show Seminar Schedule

Saturday, February 23

11am Dry Stack Stonescaping by Johnny Buck

1pm EarthKind Landscaping by Deborah Martin

2pm Rain Water Harvesting by Gy and Violet Okeson

Sunday, February 24

1pm EarthKind Landscaping by Deborah Martin

2pm Vermiculture by Nancy Hawkins

"Ask a Master Gardener" booth

10am-5pm on February 23

12pm-5pm February 24.

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Yaupon Holly Provides Color

For beautiful fall and winter color include yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) in your landscape. This small shade tolerant tree can be purchased in weeping and upright varieties. The females plants produce red berries that attract birds. This is a trouble free plant that grows 12-20 feet tall.



Spring Deanna Rankin Memorial Garden Tour

The 2008 spring garden tour will be called the Deanna Rankin Memorial Garden Tour in honor of Deanna Rankin, a member of the class of 2001. She served as a board director and also was on the garden tour committee for many years. Deanna's beautiful cottage garden overlooking Lake Belton was on the tour many times.

In the past our garden tour has been used to stimulate interest in the plant sale that usually follows a week later. This year we are reversing these two events. The plant sale will occur two days (April 12-13) and the Garden Tour April 19.

Sue Morgan and Rae Schmuck are looking for gardens to be on the spring tour. When you are a host garden you will be assigned volunteers to help you show your garden. Sometimes volunteers are available to help tidy up your garden with you.

Contact Sue Morgan (254-698-8668) or Rae Schmuck ((254 933-7765) to volunteer your garden. They will help you with sign-in sheets, brochures, yard signs and volunteer workers.



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Ants and Grasshoppers

It's chilly, and I have no desire to be outside working hard like an ant. So I decided to entertain myself, grasshopper like, and perhaps you as well, with a few odd facts and quotes about two of the insects which share our gardens with us.

First the ant, a most ubiquitous insect. They have been around for over one hundred million years, are made up of over 12,000 species, and can be found pretty much anywhere on earth. They can carry at least 20 times their own body weight, and will work in teams to carry heavier objects. The average lifetime for an ant is 45-60 days, although some species may live much longer. There have been studies that show that older worker ants seem to sense their mortality and take on riskier tasks than younger ants.

It has been said that ants will not cross a line drawn of chalk, and can in that way their entrance into your home may be controlled.

"Ants can carry twenty times their weight, which is useful information if you're moving out and you need help getting a potato chip across town." -- Ron Darian

"As a thinker and planner, the ant is the equal of any savage race of men; as a self-educated specialist in several arts she is the superior of any savage race of men; and in one or two high mental qualities she is above the reach of any man..." -- Mark Twain

"If ants are such busy workers, how come they find time to go to all the picnics?"

Marie Dressler

Then there are grasshoppers. There are about 1000 species of grasshoppers in the United States, and over 10,000 species world wide. Texas has about 160 species, five of which account for 90 per cent of the damage done. Unlike most plant eating insects, which eat only one or two particular types of plants, most grasshoppers eat many different plants. They account for many millions of dollars of damage to crops every year.

In turn, however, grasshoppers serve as food for birds, coyotes, reptiles, rodents, skunks, mantids, beetles, spiders and the maggots of parasitic flies.

A grasshopper can leap 20 times it's length. That is like a grown man being able to leap half the length of a football field.

Grasshoppers moult (shed their outer "skin") They do this by swallowing air until the old cuticle splits open.

Beginning of the End, a movie released in 1957 was a story about mutated giant grasshoppers attacking Chicago.

"One hundred trout are needed to support one man for a year. The trout, in turn, must consume 90,000 frogs, that must consume 27 million grasshoppers that live off of 1,000 tons of grass." -G. Tyler Miller, Jr.

"Grasshopper always wrong in argument with chicken." -- Book of Chan

Submitted by Jane Capen

<http://www.brainyquote.com/>
http://www.desertmuseum.org/books/nhsd_grasshopper_new.php
<http://insects.tamu.edu/extension/bulletins/i-5201.html>
<http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/Magazine/Mj02/etcetera/fascinatingfacts.asp>
<http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/~cbader/ghpiokes.html>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grasshopper>
<http://www.uga.edu/srel/kidsdoscience/sci-method-planes/animal-fun-facts.pdf>
<http://www.zimage.com/~ant/antfarm/read/quotes.html>

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2008 BCMGA Class Field Trip

Please mark April 16 on your calendar for 2008 Class Field Trip to the Holistic Gardens at Texas A&M University and the Herb Gardens at Festival Hill in Round Top.

The cost is \$20.00 for bus reservation and tip (2008 Class Members do not pay for the bus reservation). The reservations are on a first come, first serve basis. 2008 Class Members and Master Gardeners may reserve one seat for a guest. The reservations are non-refundable but transferable, that is, you may sell your reservation. For reservations, please submit a check payable to Bell County Master Gardener Association to Kim Pringle (address 2410 Birdcreek Dr., Temple, TX 76502).

The bus will depart the Bell County Extension Office at 7:00 am and will return approximately 6:00 pm. Please bring a sack lunch as we plan to dine on the bus between College Station and Round Top.

If you do transfer your reservation, please let Kim know to assist with roll calling the morning of the tour. If you have any questions, please call Kim Pringle (254) 791-1564 or Retta Deiterman (254) 773-2066.

From Dr. Joe Novak

We hope everyone's new year is off to a great start. One good thing about gardening in Brazos County is that the season just doesn't end. We are harvesting some excellent cabbage,

lettuce, broccoli and cauliflower along with radishes and other root crops and several types of greens. In the flower garden calendulas are especially pretty this winter. Other flowers blooming at this time are the fall-planted petunias, alyssum, Dianthus, toad flax and some types of stocks. Winter also gives us time to focus on our house plants and its an excellent time to plant fruits in the garden.

We will be having the first Holistic Garden plant sale of the year of Feb. 24, 25, and 26, from 9-3:00 each day. The sales will be on the inside and outside of the back of the Horticulture / Forest Science Building (HFSB). We have plenty of plant material and so no one would miss out if they came on Saturday.

The plant materials for this sale will be houseplants, herbs and fruit trees. We will also have a clearance on the few remaining bedding plants and landscape plants that we have from earlier sales.

HOUSE PLANTS:

several types of begonias, coleus, ferns, Calatheas, philodendrons, pothos, Schefflera, Ficus, Syngonium, Swedish ivy, cacti and other succulents, Pachypodium, Agave, super dwarf banana, Alocasia, mandarin plants and other Chlorophytums, Anthurium, peace lilies, African violets, and many more

HERBS:

chamomile, dill, fennel, marjoram, mints, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, thyme and more

FRUITS:

apple, apricot, blackberry, grape, jujube, peach, pear, persimmon (Japanese), plum and pomegranate

(We will prune the fruit tree for you, they are in modified plantable containers, but can be taken out of these containers if

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purchased soon, all cultivars have been growing in the Holistic Garden and have been doing very well. See notice below about seminar on fruits at Brazos Center)

Bedding plants and landscape plants will be in a reduced-price clearance

SPECIALTY ITEMS:

Gourds for birdhouses and crafts, Seedy characters, Fern bottle gardens, Old shoe succulent gardens

Seminar on FRUITS AND HEIRLOOM VEGETABLES: Brazos County Master Gardeners will have a special seminar at the Brazos Center on Saturday, February 9. Tom Leroy will give a presentation on Growing Fruits in the Brazos Valley and Dave Whiting will give a presentation on Heirloom Vegetables. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m., the presentations begin at nine and run until noon. The Holistic Garden will be conducting a fruit tree sale at the Pavilion at the Brazos Center and this will include various cultivars of the same fruit crops that are listed above.

Your support of the Holistic Garden through our plant sales makes it possible for us to do many good things for our local communities. Over 300 students will help with projects, tours for children, educational displays, garden maintenance, etc. this spring semester. Their involvement in courses that use the Holistic Garden help our local communities in many ways. Each semester eight students get an excellent form of experiential education by being student workers of the Holistic Garden. Volunteers from the community and from the Brazos County Master Gardener Association help us develop and maintain the Holistic Garden. Please come out to the Holistic Garden at any time and walk through the various gardens and displays that we have.

Thanks for your continuing support of the Holistic Garden. Please visit our <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/holisticgarden/index.html> site and come by the garden. Parking in the campus parking lots near the garden is free on weekends.

Please feel free to forward this e-mail message to anyone who may be interested and let them know that we would be happy to add their e-mail address to our file.

Joe Novak

P.S. If you are having problems or a special success with any of the plant materials that you have acquired from our sale, please let us know.



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