



The Blooming Bell

BCMGA Newsletter

March 2008

Spring Calendar

March 12 8:30 Herb Group - Herb options for shade/part-shade Gardens : Cuban Oregano, Dead Nettle and Sweet Woodruff. Everyone is invited.

March 12 11:00 BCMGA monthly meeting, Zoe Roscoe, who works with *Keep Temple Beautiful*, will present ideas of “*Beautifying Central Texas*”

March 15, 16 Spring Veggie Sale

Sat., 8am-1pm and Sun., 10 - 2

Seminars:

Spring Vegetable Gardening 10 am-11am
Controlling Garden Pests 11am-12am

April 12 -8 -1 Plant Sale and Seminars

April 19

Deanna Rankin Memorial Garden Tour

President's Corner 2/21/08

There is no doubt that spring is fast approaching. I have noticed blooms starting on our Irises and Daffodils, adding splotches of bright yellow to the otherwise still brown-tan landscape. Along with the reawakening of the vegetation, the BCMGA is also starting to show signs of increased activity.

Our Busy Spring Season:

We are starting one of our two busy seasons of the year. This weekend you will find our gardening friends in our booth at the Expo Home and Garden Show. Like last year, our

booth will include an area for the seminars that will be taught by our MG Specialists. Deb Martin will discuss Earthkind Roses, Johnny Buck will talk about his experience in hardscaping, Nancy Hawkins will discuss worm composting, and Violet and I will talk about and demonstrate basic rainwater harvesting techniques. In addition to having exhibits, literature and books will be available for the public to purchase. A new feature will be an “Ask The Master Gardener Booth” on Saturday afternoon. This will give members of the public the chance to ask questions about their garden and plant problems. Each year the Home and Garden Show is one of the Association’s major public education projects. Three weeks later, on March 15th and 16th, we will have the first of our spring fundraisers - the vegetable sale. I am sure that you have noticed all the tables in the greenhouse that are filled with newly propagated vegetable plants. We are doing something different this year – we are extending the sale for an extra day. Hopefully, this will allow individuals that cannot be there on Saturday attend on Sunday. In addition to the vegetable plants for sale, there will be seminars to educate the public and the 4H will have a hot dog and bake sale on both days. Any plants remaining after the sale is completed will be given to the 4H for them to sell. We will split those proceeds equally with the 4H group. Four weeks after the vegetable sale our Association will hold the Annual Spring Plant Sale on the April 12. There will be concurrent book sales, but no seminars, as this is the same day that the Pecan Association holds a seminar at the extension office. Hopefully, all the Pecan Association Members will come and buy plants

from us. If the second day of the vegetable sale seems to be a valuable asset, we will also extend the plant sale over 2 days. Both the vegetable and plant sales will be used to promote the sales of tickets to the upcoming yard tours.

The third of our spring fundraisers – the Annual Spring Yard Tour – will happen one week later on the 19th of April. This year we hope to have enough yards on the tour that we can cluster them into a Killeen – Copperas Cove group, a Harker Heights – Temple – Belton group and a Salado group. The public will then have the choice of either visiting their local cluster of yards, or they can drive to visit yards in other clusters if they so wish.

Now, wouldn't you know it, we will no more than finish the spring fundraisers and it will be time for the TMGA Conference in Conroe, Texas. I really hope you are planning to go to the Conference on the 24th through the 26th of April. It will really be a great experience – and Conroe is not very far away. If you cannot arrange to stay for the entire time, you can pay for only one or two days. If you are interested, go to the TMGA web site <http://texasmastergardeners.org>, and click on the county web links. Choose the Montgomery County Web Site. There you will find all of the information and registration materials, which can be downloaded for your use. If you do not have a computer, ask a friend to download and print the materials for your use.

The spring activities conclude with graduation of the new class on May 14th.

So, get prepared. Put on your running shoes and come participate with your fellow gardeners in these fun and important activities. They will make you proud to be a Bell County Master Gardener.

Dealing With Rising Propane Costs:

As you are all aware, this fall and winter has been a difficult time for the Association financially. The water leak that cost us so much money through the fall has been resolved and hopefully will not reoccur. We had just corrected that problem when propane prices went through the roof. It cost your association over \$2000 to heat the greenhouse this winter. If we are to have vegetable sales in the future, the greenhouse will have to be heated. If it is not heated, the seeds will not germinate.

Although it will not help us much over this fiscal year, your BOD recognizes that an alternative form of heating will have to be found and implemented. Replacing the leaking plastic ceiling on the greenhouse will improve its ability to retain heat somewhat, but that will not resolve the problem by itself.

In an effort to investigate alternative methods of heating the greenhouse, the Greenhouse Committee has formed a Greenhouse Architecture Subcommittee whose job it will be to investigate potential solutions to this problem and thereby hopefully avoid the cost of using propane to heat the greenhouse. This Subcommittee will report to the Greenhouse Committee, who will in turn report the BOD when a reasonable solution is found.

More Water Fun:

You may think that the presidential campaigns are interesting, but they don't hold a candle to the politics of water usage in our country and around the globe.

Last month I reported that the farmers in California are reducing their growing capacity because they find it more lucrative to sell their water to big cities, rather than use it for the irrigation of crops.

There is a new wrinkle this month in the southeastern part of our country. It seems that

when the boundary between Georgia and Tennessee was originally surveyed, they had mistakenly placed it one mile south of its true position. This little known fact had bothered no one through the past 200+ years - until recently.

You are certainly aware that Georgia has been having severe drought conditions over the past 2 or so years. The water shortage has most seriously affected the residents in the Atlanta area, where huge volumes of water are required to sustain their population. Georgia now realizes if the boundary with Tennessee were to be properly placed at the correct latitude, they would then be able to tap into the Tennessee River and divert water for use in Atlanta and other cities to the south. Georgia is currently suing Tennessee to do just that.



Lawrence Cox Tends Vegetables for Sale

Bell County Master Gardeners plan a vegetable sale event March 15th at their greenhouse in Belton. Vegetables suitable for our Central Texas climate have been chosen. Visitors to the sale can select from 13 varieties of tomatoes, 4 varieties of peppers, 2 varieties of cucumbers and 5 varieties of squash. Master Gardener interns started the plants from seed in a special soil mix concocted by Greenhouse Coordinator Lawrence Cox. Mr. Cox, a master gardener since 2000 and 45- year veteran in the nursery and landscaping field, serves as a mentor to the new class of interns and the certified master

gardeners as well. His considerable horticultural knowledge continues to improve the production and plant quality at the master gardener greenhouse. He and other master gardeners will be available to provide advice on planting techniques and information on growing requirements for a successful spring vegetable garden. Two seminars to help you will be presented, "Spring Vegetable Gardening" at 10 a. m. and "Control of Garden Pests" at 11 a.m. Bluebonnets and Indian Blankets will also be offered at the vegetable sale which runs 8 a. m. to 1 p. m. The master gardener greenhouse is located at the AgriLife Extension Office, 1605 North Main, Belton, Texas. For more information about the sale and seminars contact Greenhouse Manager Karla Tomaka (254-698-3367).

Through the combined efforts of Texas AgriLife Extension Service, HEB, Junior Master Gardener Program 4-H Program, Texas 4-H Foundation, Texas Master Gardener Association, and the Texas Department of Agriculture, we are pleased to announce the initiation of an alliance with HEB to support the JMG 4-H program. HEB has developed a promotional program to promote the JMG 4-H program and provide a source of revenue to support JMG teacher/leader training programs and JMG curricula for schools.

HEB SPONSORS JUNIOR MG AND 4-H SALES

On March 8, 2008, HEB will be selling tomatoes and peppers in all of their Texas Backyard Stores and also in 40 other HEB stores across Texas. These plants have a special tag that promotes the Junior Master Gardener 4-H project and Texas AgriLife Extension. Texas Department of Agriculture has provided funds to also have point of purchase signs and posters in the stores where the plants will be sold. The plants will retail for \$1.99 per 4" pot and the JMG program will receive \$1 for each plant sold to go toward a unique educational

program that will fund JMG teacher/volunteer training programs at the Texas Backyard Stores. HEB plans to raise over \$25,000 to support this effort. Please encourage youth and volunteers in your community to go out and buy plants to support this program. Later in the summer, dates will be set for teacher/training programs that are being funded by this project! We are very excited about this alliance and know that this will be just the beginning of many other projects with HEB.

Gardening Books Added to March Plant Sale

Nolan and Linda Young have volunteered to organize a garden oriented book sale in conjunction with our spring vegetable sale. If you have gardening books in good condition that you would like to donate, please contact Nolan and Linda at NB@clearwire.net or (254) 493-8200. Nolan has volunteered to pick up the books if you need assistance in getting them to Belton. We will be trying something new this spring by running the vegetable sale over a two day period. Sale hours will be Saturday, March 15th from 8:00 - 1:00 as usual and then Sunday, March 16th from 10:00 - 2:00. I will have sign up sheets available beginning this Wednesday.

MG Class of '08 Appreciates Opportunities

After five classes in the 2008 Master Gardener program, the topics of Earth kind Landscape Management, botany, soils and their testing, dry stack stonescaping and, everyone's favourite, "Cheapskate Gardening" have been covered. The main thing learned so far is that I've Been Doing It All Wrong! Bother! Even my frugality in acquiring plantings cannot compare to the wizardry of Mr. Raymond Marr and the overheard 'triumphs' being shared by classmates.

The instructors and members of this year's class are true marvels; Ages are diverse yet nonexistent, Genders almost evenly represented and completely ignored, Professional and personal experience so

overwhelming while being humbly given and received. Thank you, County Extension Office and Master Gardener Program.

Graduation will not be welcome as the hunger for horticulture grows! Who doesn't want to learn 'impressive' terminologies and gain experience to regale the neighbours and reaffirm our standing with children by explaining such factoids as; "The term 'soil' refers to earth component size...'dirt' refers to the mess of a teens closet."

Hands-on asexual propagation experience in the greenhouse sent everyone home carrying a plethora of HOPE. The first class after making our cuttings/divisions, there was abundant chatter about how well people's snippets were looking. It is now 3 weeks past, and the chatter and hope are waning. The black edging to my 'bulbette' is, surely, not a good sign and so many cuttings have disappeared in the self-watering large pot that the identification sticks are meaningless. Still, my hope continues...it hopes that other classmates are fairing better than I. The class of '08 is primed to do great things in Bell County.

Submitted by Donna Shott

Herb Group Invited to Killeen Garden Club

Marty Portmann, a BCMG and president of the Killeen Garden Club invited the Herb Group to a Valentine Day Friendship Lunch meeting. They demonstrated Botanical Valentines, Bath Salts and Glycerin soap and some other small crafting projects, answered questions and were treated to lunch. Members attending were Suzanne Boyer, Nancy Lansett, Joyce Richardson, Kim Pringle and Frances Idoux.

New Address for Shirley Stephenson:

*P.O. Box 3389
Harker Heights, 76548*

Garden Entertainment for Techies

Someone recently asked me what my favorite garden tools were. I replied my trowel, my bypass pruners, and my iPod. She looked a bit mystified, and so I explained.

As most everyone knows these days, an iPod is a portable media player; some are video as well as audio, some are audio only. Portable music players are, of course, made by many companies, and come under other names like Zune or Sansa.

Media players are nice for taking music with you. Weeding is a less onerous task with Feist or Bruce Springsteen for company. But it does not have to be music. Several months ago, I discovered podcasts. Podcasts give you a way to learn and or be entertained on nearly any topic in which you are interested, including gardening.

A podcast is like a radio broadcast, indeed, many come from radio programs, but a podcast comes over the internet and can be accessed by computer for listening or downloaded to a portable media player such as an iPod or Zune. The nice thing about Podcasts, as opposed to music and movies, is that most are free.

Are you lost? Let me see if I can give you an example. I may want to hear some talks about gardening. I can google "gardening podcasts" on the internet or look for gardening podcasts via iTunes. Either way a choice of several appear. I see one for Victory Garden. Unfortunately for me, it is a video podcast, and since my iPod only does audio and not video, it will not do me a lot of good. But there are other recommendations. One called "Dirt on Gardening" looks interesting, as does one called "Greenman", but I settle on a podcast called "The Gestalt Gardener" which comes from Mississippi Public Broadcasting, and features Felder Rushing, who is always fun to listen to. I

click on one of the podcasts, and enjoy it, so I download some more to put on my iPod.

If you are not interested in listening to people talk about gardening, there is an abundance of other topics to be found. There are poetry podcasts, cooking podcasts, current events, movie reviews, science, sports, anything you want. Universities now are beginning to make entire courses available via podcasts. Whatever you choose, you have an opportunity to be entertained or learn something while you are pulling the weeds or pruning your roses.

Submitted by Jane Capen

[Home and Garden Show features BCMGA Members](#)

Master Gardener Johnny Buck presented a seminar "Dry Stack Stonescaping" at the Temple Area Builders Association's Home and Garden show at the the Bell County Expo on February 23rd and 24th. Buck, builder of a fifty- foot demonstration wall at the master gardener greenhouse, explained methods, materials and tools



needed for a dry stack stone project.

Seminars were also presented by Deb Martin, Gyman and Violet Okeson and Nancy Hawkins.

BCMGA Members attend A&M Landscape Class

The course in Landscape Design held in College Station on Feb. 18-19 was attended by eleven members of the BCMGA. The first evening was a tour and dinner at *Martha's Bloomers* in Navasota. Those attending were Joan Henshaw, Terrie and Werner Hahn, Nancy Blansett, Mel Myers, Fran Sheppard, Sara Lee Perryman, Patricia Newton and Lou and Retta Deiterman. This course was the first of a four part series on landscaping.

Barclay Juried Art Show has BCMGA Entries

Deb Martin and Crystal Fisher have entries in the Barclay Juried Art Show on March 1. Deb has entries in three categories and Crystal has one. Judging will take place at 10:00 at the Cultural Activities Center. After the Award ceremony the exhibits will be open to the public for the month of March.

Deb states "There are entries from artists and students from local schools that are worth seeing as some just knock your socks off"!

JUNIOR MG NEWS

This February has indeed been very busy with activities at several schools. At Nolanville Elementary School, we have given all the 3rd and 4th graders classes in soil, composting, and vermiculture, which was given by Nancy Hawkins. Those worms were a hit with the students. Also a group of us went to Parrie Haynes State Park, and did a lesson on soil for all the 5th graders from this same school. We were led by James Greenwade, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. We led the students through a series of feeling the different types of soils, to particles of soil and their sizes, which we did through a game, and testing for pH, sodium, phosphorus, and

potassium. We also showed how the soil temperature is affected by plant material as opposed to bare ground. We taught this same lesson a total of 10 times, for about 150 students. All the students had a notebook and had to make notes at each of the different science sessions they attended. We were tired at the end of the day, but it was a very rewarding experience.

At Timber Ridge Elementary School, in Killeen, for their Math and Science Night, we helped students and family members make plant people and explained what plants needed to grow. We estimated we touched 130 students. Several of us also helped with Reading is Fun, by reading JMG books on gardening to second graders.

A first for us was with Academy Elementary School in Academy, where we once again did classes in soil, texture, particles, composting, and vermiculture. This was given to their gifted and talented students. We are hoping they will be sending some teachers to our JMG training in July.

We continue to have requests from the area schools, and as word gets out the requests will pick up. Right now, it is quiet on the home front, but several of our teachers who attended the JMG teacher training last summer are busy with this program in their schools. I am hoping that next year we can write up what they have done, and perhaps get an award or two.

I am planning this summer's Teacher Junior Master Gardener Training. It will be July 22-25, and will be from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. each day. There will be a meeting on Thursday, March 6, at 9:00 a.m. at the Extension Office to discuss schedule, budget, and activities. I have

the speakers in place, but anyone who would like to be involved in this program either by helping with the training or by being a mentor at one of our JMG schools, please email me at pma4514@sbcglobal.net. This is a most rewarding program. Hope to hear from you soon.

Mary Ann Everett

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS
are sponsored by the **TEXAS**
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