

The Blooming Bell

May 2007, Newsletter

*Bell County Master Gardeners
Association*



There will be No Monthly Meeting in May due to
the Installation/Graduation Party, May 16th,

2007

11:30 a.m.

Bell County Expo Center

BCMGA Events Schedule

- Belton Greenhouse Workdays,
Wed. & Thurs., 7 am, Belton
- Burger Wednesday, 1st Wednesday
- August 25th – Fall Veggie Sale
- October 20th – Fall Garden Tour
- October 27th – Fall Plant Sale

President's Corner

The TMGA Convention:

The Texas Master Gardener Association Convention, sponsored this year by the Hill Country Master Gardener Association, was held last week in Kerrville, Texas. I must say that they did an excellent job hosting this sizeable meeting. Bell County was represented by several of our members.

It started with a reception at the Museum of Western Art, located on the Bandera Highway just outside of Kerrville. We were surrounded there by colleagues, friends, and wonderful art - both paintings and statues - depicted the saga of the cowboy and Texas ranching. Even Red Ryder was represented. The facility was excellent and the mood was relaxed, I felt a palpable pulse of excitement as we anticipated the events that would play out over the next 2 days.

The Friday schedule was filled with a variety of tours to interesting places in the Kerrville - Fredericksburg area. Not everyone went on a tour. For those of us who did not go, Susan Sanders, a Resource Specialist for the Texas Forest Service, presented an excellent talk on Invasive Plant Species and Molly Keck, Pest Management Specialist for the Bexar County Extension Service, gave an exceptional talk on "Fire Ants: The Good, Bad, and Ugly". Some of the other education highlights included two sessions on JMG and talks on Raising Blueberries and Growing Wine Grapes in Texas, followed by the TMGA business

meeting. The day was crowned by a banquet with live musical accompaniment, followed by one of the most entertaining keynote speeches that I have personally ever heard, delivered by Felder Rushing, a well-known gardening author, radio personality, photographer, and former consumer horticulturist for the Mississippi Extension Service.

Saturday featured talks on water conservation, water-wise landscaping, "Lily Plants For Water Features", composting, ethno-botany, English gardening, and multiple county showcases. The latter events are designed to allow various associations the opportunity to show off their histories and projects.

That noon, all the Master Gardeners gathered for the Awards Luncheon, presided over by our own Deb Martin, Chairperson of the Awards Committee. All awards were awarded based on size of the applying association. Our association fit into the "medium sized" group. We applied for 4 possible award categories and were given awards in three. Thanks to our exceptional editor, Jeanne Richards, the Blooming Bell, was awarded a third place in the "best newsletter" category. The Power Point presentation that we developed on composing won a second place in the Graphic Illustration category. Mary Ann Everett won second place in "Master Gardener of The Year". Deb Martin was awarded a plaque commemorating her successful year as Chairperson for the Committee, and Walter Doude also received an individual award from the committee.

Official Propagation Specialist Certificates and pins were awarded to Mary Ann Everett, Michael Barefoot, and Louise Oldham. An Earthkind Rose Specialist Certificate and pin was awarded to Joyce Pack, and Rainwater Harvesting Specialty Certificates and pins were awarded to Mary Ann Everett, Nancy Hawkins, Deb Martin, Ursula Nana, Violet Okeson, and myself.

Next year, the Montgomery County Master Gardeners will host the convention in Conroe. Mark your calendar – it should be another great meeting.



Two Master Gardeners from Bell County, Deb Martin won second place in the state for Master Gardener of the Year Of 2005 and Mary Ann Everett won second place in the state for Master Gardener of the Year of 2006. They are pictured at the MG state convention in Kerrville at the banquet.

Other News:

I understand that the fence to enclose the east end of the greenhouse area is about to be erected - finally. The Board of Directors accepted the bid for the irrigation system to supply the raised beds along the south side of the greenhouse and the area in front of the extension office. The extra fans in the west end of the greenhouse and the new sand floor are already in use. These new features will allow us to secure the greenhouse area, automatically water the beds outside the greenhouse, and to hopefully make the Summers heat easier to bear. All of these are welcome additions. Now, the Landscape Committee will be able to proceed with the planned changes in the area just west of the greenhouse, which will include developing beds for Earthkind Roses.

We are also entering an active phase in developing a Junior Master Gardener Program. Neil Cochran and Mary Ann Everett are attending a statewide meeting in late April to learn how to set up the teaching program for the schoolteachers. We plan to have a JMG course set up in mid-summer, which will be attended by area teachers who are interested in having a JMG program in their schools. We will teach the teachers how to accomplish this.

After graduating from this class, they will become a part of our BCMGA family.

At least two other BCMGA projects are now in the active phase. The Leon Heights Elementary School project is through the planning phase and entering the first phase of "doing". A second project requested by the Killeen High School is in the early planning stage.

A New Year's a coming:

Our fiscal year will draw to a close on May 31. The New Year will begin June 1. The slate of new officers and board members proposed by the Nominating Committee was voted upon at the last BCMGA meeting and all were elected by acclamation. Board term limits dictate that after serving two years on the Board of Directors, a member must take a year off the Board. They can, however, serve the Association in some other capacity not related to board functions. With the New Year comes reassignment of committee and administrative posts. There will be sign-up sheets so you can let me know what your interests are, so that I can try to place you in an area of your interest.

Remember that our annual membership fee is due by the end of May. If you do not have the hours required for recertification, you can still be an inactive member as long as you pay your dues. Inactive members retain all the privileges of active membership except they cannot vote or hold leadership positions.

The Graduation ceremony for the new class will be held at the Expo on May 16th. I want to invite all of you to come to welcome the Class of 2007 into the Association and greet the newly elected officers and board members. See you then.

Gy Okeson
President BCMGA

Raising Blueberries in Texas

For those interested in growing blueberries in Central Texas, *here is a condensed version of the seminar presented by Dr. Larry Stein at the Texas State Master Gardener Conference* in Kerrville Texas.

Dr. Stein is Associate Professor and Extension Horticulturist, Department of Horticultural Sciences, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, TAMU's Research and Extension Center in Uvalde.

Why would you want to grow blueberries? Aside from the health benefits that are well known, they have few pest problems either insect or disease, and they are constant producers so you have fruit all through the growing season.

Yes, Virginia, you CAN grow blueberries in Central Texas but it takes some work and preparation. Blueberries require a soil pH of 4.5 to 5.5 and well drained, loose, friable soil. Water is critical but they cannot tolerate standing in water, drip irrigation is recommended if possible. Thick mulching, full sun and they normally need cross pollination. So how do you accomplish all this in Central Texas? According to Dr. Stein the best way to give blueberries what they need is to grow them in containers. Blueberry roots are very shallow going down only about twelve inches, so the container does not have to be overly large. Start by lining the container with peat moss, and then use a potting mixture of pine bark mulch and washed sand.

Dr. Stein recommends that the peat moss, pine bark mulch and washed sand be from an acidic environment to ensure a

lower pH. Next choose a rabbiteye variety. Dr. Stein recommends Tifblue or Climax. Tifblue, according to Dr. Stein, is self-pollinating. Honey bees help in the pollination process. These varieties do need a winter chill of about 500 hours to set fruit.

When watering, use rain water if possible because it has a more neutral pH and also helps to flush out salt accumulations. If you use tap water it is recommended that you have the water tested to determine the pH of the water. If necessary use phosphoric acid to adjust the pH to the desired range. Water often, in hot weather. Fertilize at bud break, in May and in June with a slow release fertilizer such as Osmocote or a fertilizer with a ratio of 3-1-2. You can use azalea food or ammonium sulfate as a supplement to Osmocote but use sparingly.

Plants fruit continuously so the fruit does not ripen uniformly. Fruit should be picked every few days when the berry turns a dark blue. In a year where the canes produce heavily, the next years crop may be reduced. Older main canes should be pruned to the ground to make way for new production. If the plant becomes dense with canes, interior canes can be pruned out to allow better sun penetration.

If you can manage all of this, you should have BLUEBERRIES. As an added bonus, you get nice fall color when the leaves turn red.

For more information Dr. Stein can be e-mailed at larrystein@tamu.edu
Submitted By Gary F. Slanga

NEW CLASS HAPPENINGS



Oak Wilt Specialist Deb Martin teaches the fundamentals of Oak Wilt and other diseases affecting the Oak species to the Class Of 2007.



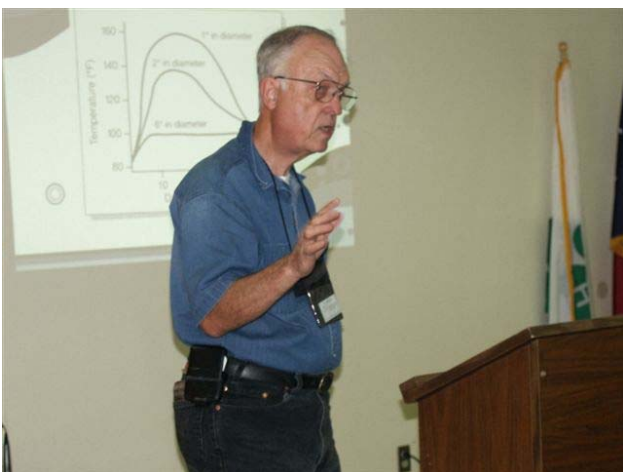
Annette Ensing, Class of 2007, films class lectures and transfers them to CD. They are then placed in the media library. Annette also filmed the Veggie Sale Seminars.



Master Gardener Charles Spencer works as a volunteer mentor to the Class of 2007. Ginger Jones is Mentor Coordinator.



EarthKind Specialist Mary Ann Everett inspires the Class of 2007 to be an EarthKind gardener.



MG President and Compost Specialist Gy Okeson teaches the mysteries of compost to the Class of 2007.



Reid Lewis, Horticulturalist at Temple College & owner of Sweet Briar Nursery, awed class of 2007 (and visitors to the class) with his knowledge and beautiful slide presentation on native plants.



Master Gardener and master trip organizer Kim Pringle on the bus to Texas A&M in College Station. 2007 class members enjoyed the field trip to the Holistic Gardens, the A&M trial gardens and shopping for roses and companion plants at the Antique Rose Emporium.



These are class of 2002 Master Gardeners who received 5 yr badges at the April 11th meeting.

Herb Study Group

The Herb Study Group is nearing completion of its first year schedule. Starting in July, 2006, with "Anise Anyone," we are headed for our last two lessons, "Mingle with the Mint Family" in June and "Silver Herb Gardens" in July. The group is open to all interested Master Gardeners. We have presented several demonstrations during the year, and we are preparing study sheets on the herbs that we have discussed. We will include some review material as we plan the next study schedule. If you'd like to join us, please contact Kim Pringle.



Hats off to all the volunteers that worked the 10th Anniversary Spring Garden Tour. It was a fantastic turn out. Saturday was a perfect day for a garden tour, cool breezy weather, beautiful gardens and great people.

Rae and I would like to thank those that volunteered their gardens. It was such a difficult spring, you had to compete with the cooler than normal weather, high winds, storms, and **SNOW** of all things right before the tour --- not one of you complained. Nothing stopped you. Not only that; the gardens were absolutely beautiful.

We would like to thank all the volunteer workers, those that worked getting some of the gardens ready and to those that worked the day of the garden tour. You did a great job, thanks so much for your help. It could not have been done without you. All your hard work really paid off. Thanks for a job well done, you were outstanding.

Also, this is a good time to start thinking of the Fall Garden Tour (Oct. 20, 2007). If you are interested in showcasing your garden this fall, please contact Sue Morgan (txmorgan2@earthlink.net) or Rae Schmuck (rae616@earthlink.net) We have started a sign up sheet and would love to add your name.

Submitted by Rae and Sue

BURGER WEDNESDAY WORKERS ...WOW!



Members of the **Hard Hat Crew**, Charles Newsome, Johnny Buck, Vernon Chenoweth, Neil Cochran and D.J. Campbell install fan on the west wall of the greenhouse. Greenhouse volunteers and plants appreciate the Hard Hat Crew's hard work improving conditions in the greenhouse.



Malachi, owned by Charles Newsom, watches over the Hard Hat Crew as they install ventilation in the greenhouse.



Girl Power! Emily Butts and Ursula Nanna help remove gravel from the greenhouse floor.



Master Gardener Charles Newsom brings out the heavy equipment to assist in the removal of the gravel from the greenhouse.



Bob Gordon, Clyde White, Neil Cochran and Charles Spencer scrape gravel from the greenhouse floor.



Weary greenhouse volunteers enjoy Nolan Young's sausage and chicken after replacing the gravel with coarse sand on the greenhouse floor. Hopefully this will improve the safety and comfort level for greenhouse volunteers.



Hard work is rewarded on Burger Wednesday at the greenhouse. Chef Nolan Young and Clyde White keep watch over the chicken and sausage.

A Short History of Nigella

Late spring brings Nigella (*Nigella damascena*) or Love-in-a-Mist to many of our gardens. Most often blue, although there are white and pink ones, nigella is a delightful addition to many gardens, especially casual or “cottage” gardens. Love in a Mist is a member of the family Ranunculaceae (buttercup family). Growing 15-24 inches high, the Nigella’s leaves are light green, fine, and lacy, somewhat reminiscent of green fennel. The actual flower is about an inch to an inch and a half wide, and has 5-10 sepals. Petals are found at the base of the stamens and are small. The flowers are surrounded by very fine hair-like bracts (which account for the “mist”)

This annual freely self-sows. If you grow this you will have plenty of seeds, so you might like to cut some of the stalks before the large, balloon-like green and burgundy seed pods open and dry them. Hanging them upside down and in a paper bag in a dry area is a good method. When thoroughly dry, the pods are attractive in dried arrangements.

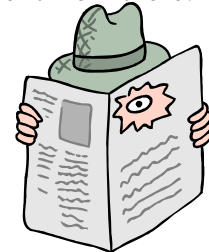
Nigella damascena is native to southern Europe, as well as Northern Africa. It has spread freely, however, through northern Europe, and of course, America. Thomas Jefferson was growing it in 1810. The botanical name, *nigella*, comes from the Latin *Niger*, for black.

Nigella seeds are a deep black. *Damascena* indicates that the plant was thought to have come from Damascus. The seeds were sometimes used for culinary and/or medicinal purposes. It was added to breads and cakes in Middle Eastern cooking. Medicinally, it was thought to aid stomach troubles and fever.

As do many flowers, the Nigella has a meaning that stems from Victorian times, when knowledge of the language of flowers was considered essential in some circles. The message accompanying love-in-a-mist was “You puzzle me”.

At times this flower has also been known as devil-in-a-bush, jack-in-the- green, lady-in-the-bower, and fennel flower. The most common name however, has been Love-in-a-Mist. If you are wondering where this name came from, well, apparently someone thought the flower’s appearance was a bit, umm, suggestive. I will let your imagination take it from there.

**After all, this is a
“G” rated newsletter.**



References:

100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names - by Diana Wells
[http://www.flowerstomd.com/flowers_general.php#LOVE-IN-A-MIST%20\(Nigella%20damascena\)](http://www.flowerstomd.com/flowers_general.php#LOVE-IN-A-MIST%20(Nigella%20damascena))
<http://georgiaclay.20m.com/forum.html#Love>
<http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/Features/flowers/nigella/nigella.htm>
<http://www.victorianbazaar.com/meanings.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigella_damascena

Submitted by Jane Capen

McLennan County Master Gardener **5th Annual Plant Sale May 19th,** **9am-3pm, 4605 W. Waco Drive.**

There will be a variety of plants including Texas natives, shade plants, house plants, cacti, perennials, annuals, and many others. All of the plants have been grown or can be grown in our own yards and gardens. Come shop early, some varieties go fast. For question call the McLennan County Extension Office 757-5180 or 751-7459.

More than Parsley, Sage, Rosemary & Thyme

There are times when I hear the comment "Herbs are ugly." Is a rose *Rosa* ugly?

Is lavender *Lavandula* ugly? I certainly don't think so with both of them not only looking good but smelling good too!

What about dianthus *Dianthus chinensis*, pot marigold *Calendula officinalis*, and nasturtiums *Tropaeolum majus*? I love these herbs because they are both beautiful and quite tasty, whether they are in the ground, a pot or a salad! Do you know that there are over 2,000 herbs which include roses? And do you know that many of our Texas Native Plants are also herbs? Herbs have been used for thousands of years by many people from all around the globe. Native Americans relied on herbs (many of which are also considered Native Plants) for many purposes but especially for medicinal reasons. Herbs are not only used for culinary purposes, as most people think, but they are also used for medicinal, cosmetic, household cleaning solutions, dyes, and arts and crafts purposes as well. They are sometimes referred to as "culinary, medicinal, house-hold, industrial, tea plant" herbs. Some herbs have multiple uses that carry over into all of these categories. And what can be said about Nobile Dendrobiums *Dendrobium Nobile*, a diverse genus of orchids with over 1,000 species, other than how beautiful they are? Yes, they too are herbs with evidence that they were used as herbals in China and India about 7,000 years ago.

You might be surprised to realize that some of the plants you think of as "landscaping trees and plants" are also herbs. *Vitex Agnus-castus*, also known as

a chaste tree, is an herb, along with citrus trees *Citrus*, bay trees *Laurus nobilis*, cedar trees *Cedrus*, pine trees *Pinus*, beech trees *Fagus*, birch trees *Betula*, and willow trees *Salix* to name a few trees which are herbs. Other plants that are also herbs include sunflowers *Helianthus annuus*, Begonias *Begonia semperflorens*, ginger *Zingiber officinale*, and of course rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis*. I really don't understand such blanket statements about herbs being ugly, and I have to attribute the comment to the fact that many people don't know what herbs (sometimes referred to as "the useful plants") are, so the following is the definition of an herb: According to *The Herb Society of America's New Encyclopedia of Herbs and Their Uses* by Deni Bown: "The term 'herb' has more than one definition. Botanists describe an herb as a small, seed bearing plant with fleshy, rather than woody, parts (from which we get the term 'herbaceous'). In this book, the term refers to a far wider range of plants. In addition to herbaceous perennials, herbs include trees, shrubs, annuals, vines, and more primitive plants, such as ferns, mosses, algae, lichens, and fungi. They [herbs] are valued for their flavor, fragrance, medicinal and healthful qualities, economic and industrial uses, pesticidal properties, and coloring materials (dyes)." Many herbs are favorites of wildlife. Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, passion flower *Passiflora incarnata*, dill *Anethum graveolens*, fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*, borage *Borago officinalis*, rue *Ruta graveolens*, citrus and butterfly weed *Asclepias tuberosa* are some butterfly herb favorites. And many herbs, especially the salvias, a genus of some 900 species,

are favorites of hummingbirds, including the same garden sage *Salvia Officinalis* grown for cooking. Other salvia favorites are pineapple sage *S. elegans*, hummingbird sage *S. guaranitica*, autumn sage *S. greggii*, scarlet sage, a/k/a Texas sage *S. coccinea*, black and blue salvia, *S. guaranitica*.

Other hummer herb favorites include Turk's cap *Malvaviscus arboreum*, foxgloves *Digitalis*, and anise hyssop *Agastache foeniculum*.

Culinary Herbs: Finally, I think that culinary herbs are beautiful because of their wide range of scents, textures, colors, and sizes. And the best thing about them is they taste good; they can make a "plain old meal" into a really "great meal." Herb vs. Spice or soft tissue vs. woody tissue: Herbs are plants that do not develop persistent woody tissue. Spices are derived from the roots, barks, unopened flowers, and seedpods of woody shrubs and trees and various aromatic vegetable products. Some herbs are both; i.e. dill, fennel, and coriander, to name a few.

- Culinary herbs are herbaceous plants that add flavor and color to all types of meals.
 - If you find that low fat or low salt foods taste bland, use herbs to enhance the flavor of virtually any dish, including desserts. Generally, herbs are delicately flavored, so add them to your cooking in the last few minutes, or you can do like I do and add them at the beginning of cooking and then throw some more herbs in at the last minute, right before serving.
- Medicinal Herbs: Before pharmaceutical companies, man relied on herbs for medical purposes. Willow bark has been used for pain relief since the first century A.D. The willow *Salix* produces salicylic

acid which was first synthesized in 1838 and provides the basis of our modern-day aspirin. The chaste tree *Vitex agnus-castus* is considered to be a female hormonal balancer. The purple coneflower *Echinacea purpurea* is a native Texas wildflower that is said to be an immune system booster. Goldenrod *Solidago*, another Texas wildflower, is said to be a diuretic and respiratory herb. The nettles, including the hated stinging nettles, *Urtica dioica* can be steamed or stir-fried with garlic and eaten or drunk as a tea to help anemia, asthma, or act as a diuretic. Both passion flower *Passiflora incarnata* and St. John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum* are reputed to help with the nervous system. Garlic *Allium sativum* and onion *A. cepa* show evidence that suggests valuable compounds found in them can actually lower glucose levels by competing with insulin in the liver. Pot marigold *Calendula officinalis* is used as a salve to treat burns, stop bleeding, soothe the pain of injuries, and promote the healing of wounds, insect bites, and bruises. It is nourishing and soothing, and has anti-bacterial and antidepressant properties. Frankincense *Boswellia sacra* and myrrh *Commiphora myrrha* are herbs which are scented plant resins from shrubs. And yarrow *Achillea* is an herb. All three of these herbs have been used as medicinal herbs for centuries. So before you make the comment, "Herbs are ugly," think about all the beautiful plants that are herbs! Good gardening!

Linda Turner Collins
Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardener
ltcollins_1@charter.net

Submitted by; Kim Pringle w/permission by Linda Turner Collins.

Rose-Pickers Disease

My husband regarded the scratches on my arms from pruning rose branches after the recent snow. ***“You know, there is a fungus you can get from infections from rose thorns.”*** ***There is?*** As if we did not all have enough to worry about -- it actually is possible that a prick from a rose thorn can make you really, really sick. Probably the overall likelihood of this happening is fairly small, but you might want to know about it all the same, and be careful.

Sporotrichosis is a skin infection caused by the fungus *Sporothrix schenckii* (occasionally known as “Rose-Picker’s Disease”). This fungus tends to be found on twigs, sphagnum moss, hay and rose thorns. Obviously gardeners and people whose work involves handling plants are likely candidates for acquiring this fungus.

While occasionally it can be obtained in the lungs by inhaling the spores, it is most commonly acquired from the pricks of rose thorns (and hay, sphagnum moss, etc.) Symptoms begin with a small, usually painless, bump that resembles an insect bite. Other bumps may follow, later with ulceration, which are slow to heal. Red streaks emanating from the infection site may be present. People can be really unlucky and have it spread to bones and joints, lungs, and even the brain. Generally though, it is the skin that is affected.

It is, of course, preferable to prevent this infection. Wear good, heavy gloves and long sleeves when working with roses or other prickly plants. Don’t go barefoot in the garden. Be sure any breaks in the skin are covered before heading out to the garden. Wash well, and remove thorns after working in the garden. See your doctor promptly if you have a skin infection that you think may have started with a scratch from a rose and you experience symptoms, this is not something that goes away on its own.



Submitted by Jane Capen

<http://skin-care.health-cares.net/sporotrichosis.php>

http://www.medicineonline.com/references/Womens_Health/info/Sporotrichosis/

http://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi/feb2003.html



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