



The Blooming Bell

Bell County Master Gardener Association Newsletter

November 2007

November BCMGA Events

Nov. 7 – Burger Wednesday, Greenhouse 101:

11:00 a.m. *Plant Watering* by Don Wyatt

November 14 – Herb Study Group, 8:30 under the trees or Extension office entry

November 14 – Monthly Meeting, Special Events Room, Bell County Expo.

10:30 – Social Time

11:00 – Program with Neil Cochran

12:00 – Lunch

1:00 – New Class Orientation

BCMGA Program: Gardens of Berlin

Neil Cochran will share experiences and photographs of his recent trip to Berlin where he visited the gardens of the city

President's Corner

It is hard to believe that Christmas is once again upon us. It just seems like yesterday was summer. October always contains our last big funding event of the year - the fall Plant Sale and Seminars. The sale is scheduled to occur on the 27th of October. The greenhouse is filled with high quality plants to sell and they are organized as they have never been in the past, which should make shopping even easier. By the time you read this, the event will be history. I hope you were able to come out and help to make this a truly big event. I also hope that you were able to attend the BCMGA Picnic that was held on the Allen farm in south Temple on the tenth of October. Frances Idoux did a fantastic job of making this a fun and educational event. The farm, that encompasses the area around historic Fryer's Creek, was covered with native flora and fauna. Thank you for a great outing, Frances.

Upcoming Activities

The greenhouse committee has begun to institute some policy changes. First, they are beginning to have classes in greenhouse techniques (watering, propagation, etc.) on Wednesday mornings. These classes are designed for those of you that want to update your skills. We want everyone to feel secure that they have the latest knowledge in the "how to" tasks that will continue to keep our greenhouse operations producing high quality plants. This is one of the education events that I have been trying to encourage over the past 18 months.

The Production Coordinator, Annette Ensing, has just distributed a greenhouse plant "wish list" to the membership. Be sure take a few minutes to review it and indicate the plants or seeds you might have that the greenhouse could use for propagation. Then return it to her or Karla Tomaka. In the past, when specific cuttings or seeds were needed for plant propagation, the greenhouse managers had to send out a request by email to the entire membership. The "wish list" will make it possible for them to contact only those individuals who indicate that they have the specific plant materials required. This will hopefully add a level of efficiency to our propagation activities. The Board of Directors has told Crystal Fisher to start an ambitious project to improve the esthetic appearance inside the greenhouse. The project involves adding a painting to each of the doors of the cabinets in the greenhouse that illustrate the important techniques used in the greenhouse. These paintings will cover propagation techniques, watering, chemical use, disease identification, pest problems, potting and repotting, composting, etc. I think everyone who has seen a sample of her artwork and heard her presentation has been favorably

impressed.

The annual Christmas Party has been scheduled on December 13th at the Expo. If you have items that will be used in the silent auction, be sure to notify Ilene Miller or Violet Okeson before November 20th. Three new communication modalities are now available to members:

The new Handbook is now available. I think you will be pleasantly surprised with the quality of the Handbook. Jane Capen, Jan Anderson, and Judy Herrmann have done an excellent job. The material is now in an attractive loose leaf binder that has the information in color-coded dividers for your convenience. The MG roster also has the members identified by type of membership for the first time. If you have not gotten yours, please make plans to pick it up from the secretaries at the extension office.

Our association now has a new web site. I think you will find it artistically pleasing and much more informative than the old site. If you have suggestions or corrections, direct them to Deb Martin, who is our Webmaster. If you previously received the Blooming Bell by email each month, you will now just receive a memo with a link to the web site, where you can see the current and previous Blooming Bell newsletters. If you are one of the few that received it as hard copy, then it will continue to arrive in your mailbox. The easiest way to get to our web site is to go to

www.texasmastergardeners.org and click on Texas Master Gardener County Web Sites, then on Bell County. The Killeen Daily Herald has asked BCMGA to send them "gardening tips" to be used in the gardening section of the weekend edition. We are currently working out the details with the paper. Obviously, providing 52 articles a year is a serious undertaking for a volunteer organization. In the meantime, until the details are known, you can start thinking about what articles that you can provide. Remember, these are gardening tips, not extensive encyclopedic tomes. If you have questions, you can contact Mary Lew Quesinberry.

Water Conservation in the Headlines:

The BCMGA will again participate in the Clearwater Conservation District Symposium that will be held again at the Expo on November 8th. This symposium is daylong and free to the public - so feel free to attend if you wish. Our Rainwater Harvesting Specialty group will have their RWH exhibit at the symposium. In addition, two of our rainwater specialists, Mary Ann Everett and Nancy Hawkins, will talk on Home Rainwater Harvesting and Vermiculture. I hope that you have noticed that the news media have been spending more and more time talking about the importance of water conservation - both here in the United States and around the World. Dire predictions are coming true due to the interaction of natural forces with the ever-expanding world population.

One of the most straight forward examples of man-made problems is south Nevada. Last October, I addressed this problem in the President's Corner. I wrote, "While I was there [in Las Vegas], one of the local news channels aired a story about how the South Nevada Water Authority was threatening to sue the North Nevada Water Authority for their water rights. If successful, they planned to construct a \$3,000,000,000 (billion) pipeline from a mountain valley in Elko County, located in Northeast Nevada, to Las Vegas. This valley has well water that farmers use to irrigate their crops and raise their cattle. Elko County has apparently been fighting this takeover of their water rights for some years, stating that if their water is diverted to Las Vegas, they had just as well close up shop and quit agriculture. There is just not enough water for both places. Of course, Las Vegas feels that getting the water is mandatory because of all the people living (and moving) there! If they don't get the water, maybe some of the people will have to go somewhere else, which wouldn't be all that bad." This is the first of the great US "water wars". It is now on the national news that South Nevada suing the North Nevada ranchers for their water and the latter are fighting back. The second US "water war" is between North and South Carolina, who are reportedly suing

each other over water rights. We are all aware of the problems between the United States and Mexico involving the Rio Grande and Colorado systems. NBC news recently reported that the Ganges River in India and the Yangtze River in China are both drying up and suffering from severe pollution, in both cases severely impacting the health of the people living in these densely populated regions. Unfortunately, there is no "magic bullet" to cure the problems. Desalination plants may be somewhat effective for areas that lie on the seacoast, but are not going to be of much help for inland areas of large continents, such as Omaha, Nebraska. No one seems to want to address the root effect of over-population. Every increase in the human population means that less of this finite natural resource is available to the rest. The population of Texas is estimated to double in the next 30-40 years. Where will we find the water needed to supply these people? The only rational way we have to deal with this problem is through water conservation and rainwater harvesting. Hopefully, in our meager way, the BCMGA is helping to promote this solution.

Gy Okeson, President, BCMGA

BCMGA 2008 Events

February 23-24 - Home & Garden Show:

Ask A Master Gardener

March 15 - Spring Veggie Sale & Seminar

April 19 - Springtacular Garden Tour

April 26 - Spring Veggie Sale & Seminar

September 6 - Fall Veggie Sale & Seminar

October 11 - Fall Plant Sale & Seminar

October 18 - Fall Glory Garden Tour

October Burger Wednesday

Nolan Young cooks for gardeners as Emilie Butts, Barbara Beebe and Don Wyatt fill their plates and Clyde White enjoys the perfect picnic day.



2008 Class Orientation November 14

Orientation for the new class will be held at the Expo Center Nov. 14, starting at 1:00pm. Since the November monthly meeting is also scheduled that day, the membership is invited participate in a light lunch, starting at 12:00 and to mingle with and welcome the new students.

The first day of class will be January 2, featuring Dr. Doug Welsh. As always, the membership is welcome to audit any class (and receive educational hours) throughout the year.

Neil Cochran and Special Needs Children

Neil Cochran and Wayne Rhoden and Boy Scouts brought by Mary Ann Everett educated and entertained 100+ children with special needs and their siblings at the Children's Special Needs Seminar "Inkdable Possibilities" on Saturday October 20, 2007. The Fall Festival for children was held under a big tent in the area across from the Emergency Room at Scott and White while their parents were attending educational sessions in the Texas A&M conference center at Scott and White. Our Master Gardeners presented using the Know and Grow Sombrero and other Jr. Master Gardner projects.

Submitted by Jean Coufal Master Gardner from class of 2007 and Children's Special Needs Network Board Member

Christmas Reservations Due

Reservations for the BCMGA Christmas party must be made by the November 14th meeting. The form can be found in the October newsletter, available on the website. Also, auction items are needed. Hopefully, each member will solicit or donate one or two items. Ilene Miller, 778-4369 and Jean Kitchens, 771-2942 will take items in Temple. Diane Wallin, 947-0156 is in Salado and Violet Okeson, 780-3561, will take items from Belton members. For Killeen members, Barbara Bebe, 526-6656, and Marlene Gillman, 628-7762, will take items. The committee would like to have them before the party date.

Greenhouse Wish List

The Greenhouse Crew has a greenhouse wish list for MGs to fill out with plants, cuttings or seeds members could provide to the greenhouse. See Karla or Annette for a copy to fill out.

Tyler Elementary Jr. Master Gardeners



On October 18 and 19, 2007 the Tyler Elementary Jr. Master Gardner group submitted their paperwork to the Extension Office and started the first of their outdoor gardening projects, building raised beds. Radishes were planted because they could be ready for harvest before the Christmas holiday break.



Shelley McMillion is the 4th/5th grade teacher who attended the July MG classes to become certified and she is joined in the Jr. Master Gardner program by all of the staff, especially Rebecca Hibner, Resouce Director in planning gardening space at the school. Eighty kids marked their plant with flags on toothpicks.

October Picnic at Allen Farm



Raye Virginia Allen shared her love of her beautiful land as gardeners toured and had a picnic lunch instead of a meeting on Oct. 10.



Kim Pringle and Jane Capen enjoy a visit.



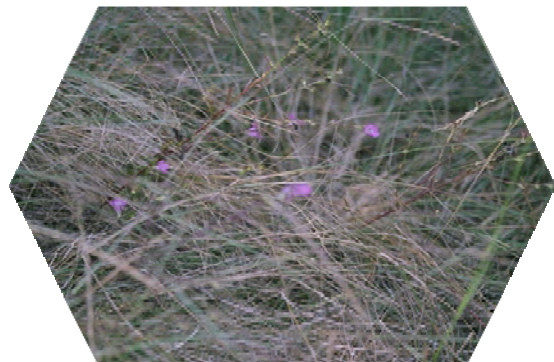
Lawrence Cox and



Jeanette Karr and Carol



Klement



Deb Martin Interviewed on ***Keeping your pets safe in your*** ***backyard jungle***

Killeen Daily Herald

Posted on: Saturday, October 20, 2007

Today's News:

By Desiree Johnson
Killeen Daily Herald

Your backyard can be a makeshift jungle for your pets; puppies play in the dirt, and cats meander through the bushes. Yet, among the landscaping can lie hidden dangers that could be harmful, even fatal to your four-legged family members.

Deborah Martin, dog owner and master gardener, said some flowers can be harmful if animals dig up and eat the bulbs, such as daffodils and hyacinths. The bulbs can cause gastrointestinal problems and can mean an unexpected trip to the veterinarian.

"Oleander bushes are extremely poisonous," Martin said. "Every part of the plant is harmful, and they're pretty common in this area. Usually the odor keeps pets away, but sometimes a dog can eat them anyway."

Martin also said some flowers planted for their aesthetic beauty can be harmful, such as larkspurs, foxgloves and irises.

Harmful plants can even come in unexpected places. Rhubarb stems, for example, are fine for making pies, but any part of the rhubarb plant could kill an animal. The same goes for vegetables. Tomatoes themselves aren't harmful to pets, but the plant's stems and leaves can be.

And don't forget indoor house plants, either.

"A common plant in homes and offices is dung cane," Martin said. "It has big green leaves and doesn't need much light to grow. If pets eat (the plant), it can cause a heart attack and become fatal."

At Town and Country Veterinary Hospital in Killeen, Dr. Mitchell Jacobs said while the occurrence of pets sickened by harmful plants is not common, it can still be a problem.

"Most of the time, dogs or cats won't mess with (harmful plants), but sometimes you get that puppy that just chews on everything," Jacobs said. "The problem is, they eat things and we never know about it. They just get sick and usually we have no idea what plant the animal ate."

Jacobs, who owns two cats, two dogs, eight chickens and three beehives, said while some plants such as English ivy are problems year-round, most plant dangers occur around this time of year, closer to the holiday season.

"I see a lot of problems with pets who have eaten poinsettias, or the cat ate the mistletoe," Jacobs said.

This time of year also involves non-plant-related illnesses in pets. "Some people change car fluids on the street or a radiator hose breaks in the winter and those fluids have a sweet taste to animals. Not to mention bait placed around the house for rats, mice and roaches," Jacobs said.

These potential dangers are not limited to pets, either.

Small children can be curious about the

outdoors and parents should take precaution in what kids might pick up and put in their mouths.

“I recommend education,” Martin said. “Teach kids not to go near poisonous plants, and label dangerous ones with a cartoon face so they know not to go near it if they can’t read.”

Martin also suggests being careful with pesticides you spray on your yard. Dogs often chew on grass to clean their teeth and improve digestion, which is good for them, but the presence of pesticides could be dangerous.

Ultimately, if you’re truly concerned about the safety of your pets and kids, simply don’t plant potentially harmful greenery in your yard and remove the ones that exist. Taking an extra step to make sure furry family members are safe in the great outdoors will mean a worry-free future for the entire family.



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