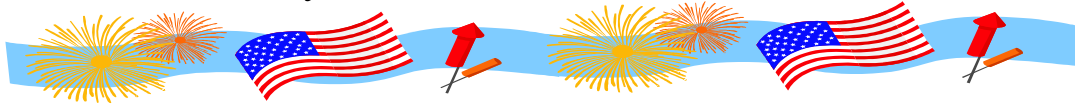


TheBloomingBell

Bell County Master Gardeners Association



July 2006, Newsletter

Monthly Meeting Wednesday, July 12, 2006, 11:00 a.m.

Bell County Extension Office

1605 N. Main St., Belton, Texas 76513



Aerial photo courtesy of Bill Morson Soldiers' Prayer

The flag pictured above is located in Lompoc, California. Created in 2002, the Floral Flag is 740 feet long and 390 feet wide and maintains the proper Flag dimensions, as described in Executive Order #10834. This Flag is 6.65 acres and is the first Floral Flag to be planted with 5 pointed Stars, comprised of White Larkspur. Each Star is 24 feet in diameter; each Stripe is 30 feet wide. This Flag is estimated to contain more than 400,000 Larkspur plants, with 4-5 flower stems each, for a total of more than 2 million flowers. The flowers are grown by seed companies. It's a beautiful place, close to Vandenberg AFB.

EVENTS SCHEDULE

- Belton Greenhouse Workdays,
Wed. & Thurs., 7 am, Belton
- Burger Wednesday, 1st Wednesday
- Fall Vegetable Sale 8-10am, Aug 5th
- Fall Garden Tour, Oct 14, 2006
- Fall Seminar & Plant Sale,
8am-1pm, Oct 21, 2006



Greenhouse News

Our greenhouse has a new look. Thanks to the hardhat crew along with many other dedicated volunteers we now have sand table tops for all our plant tables in the greenhouse. This will help our plants retain moisture during the hot summer months and develop a healthier root system. We have begun the process of repotting our plants in a new soil mixture also designed to help them better beat the summer heat. Our vegetable demonstration gardens are producing beautiful produce. The greenhouse and hardening house are being reorganized and our “herb ladies” plan to showcase herb varieties, production and use. Neil Cochran has agreed to serve as our resident rose specialist with plans to acquire and display all varieties of Earthkind Roses in our landscape. It is an exciting time in the greenhouse! With the heat index rising, the greenhouse will be open for volunteers to work from 7:00 am – 12:00 pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays each week. Hope to see you there!

Burger Wednesday will be Wednesday, July 5th. We will be moving the compost bins to their new location to make way for our storage building. We will also be finishing up the

repotting and planting seeds for plants to be sold at the August 5th vegetable sale. Volunteers

Greenhouse News Contd

may report as early as 7:00 am if they would like, to get started before the heat of the day sets in. We need volunteers to bring side dishes and desserts for our Burger Wednesday meal. If you are able to bring either a side dish or dessert please contact Karla Tomaka at kstomaka@aol.com or (254) 698-3367 and let me know what you can bring. Thanks for your support.

Submitted by Karla Tomaka

E-mail Changes

Don/Betty Lowe - dolo1939@earthlink.net

Fall Vegetable Sale Help Wanted

The fall vegetable sale will be Saturday, August 5th from 8:00 am - 10:00 am in the Extension Parking Lot. Help is needed prior to the sale to move and set up the tables, to work at the sale itself, and for tear down and clean up afterward. If you can help please contact Crystal Fisher at crystal@vvm.com or (254) 899-9900.

Deadlines

Members are advised of a July 31st deadline for payment of 2006-2007 BCMGA dues. Dues are \$20 and payable to Jan Anderson, Treasurer, 3114 River Place Drive, Belton, Texas 76513.

Also, July 31st is deadline for turning in June 1, 2005- May 31, 2006 hours for certification. Please turn in hours to Pat Pomaykl at the Extension office or fax to Pat at 254-933-5312. Hours for certification requirements are 50 service hours and 12 education hours.

Submitted by Mary Lew Quesinberry

President's Corner

I am very grateful for the way the administrative transition is progressing. Almost all of the leadership positions are in place and a sense of optimism and cooperation is in the air as we move forward with our projects. You can see it reflected in the smiles on member's faces. Fortunately, I have been able to enlist the considerable talents of Lawrence Cox to change the greenhouse environment. Lawrence is a retired greenhouse professional and vegetable farmer, whose greatest love is to teach all he knows about growing plants - which is considerable. He has previously proven his merit by leading the vegetable demonstration garden team. His success in that area is obvious to all who visit the gardens. In the past month, he has already showed us how to amend our propagation soil so that it will hold more water - and hold it longer. This seemingly small change will translate into less water needed to grow our plants, as well as improved quality of plants that we grow. Additional water conservation will be associated with modification of the propagation tables in the greenhouse. You have probably noticed that the tables now have solid tops that are covered with sand. The sand will catch excess water when the plants are watered, retaining it for use by the plants. The solid tabletops will also cut evaporation, minimizing drying of the roots, which previously was a problem. The good news is that these "minor changes" represent a significant step toward the eventual demise of the dreaded watering schedule. The bad news is that we will still have to water our plants, just not as often as before. We will continue to need help from the membership if we are to have a viable greenhouse program and profitable plant sales. The triad of new greenhouse leaders was completed with the addition of Crystal Fisher as

our Production Coordinator, and Karla Tomaka as our Greenhouse Manager. They are immensely talented volunteers, who are attacking their jobs with a vengeance. They are filled with new ideas about how best to have successful plant sales and how to incorporate the greenhouse into the education of not only our Master Gardeners and student Gardeners,

but also the community as a whole. It will be inspiring to watch as their ideas and projects take shape over the next 12 months.

Other new additions to the greenhouse environment include the construction of a gate and fence across the east end of the greenhouses. This is needed to improve the security of the area. We are also planning to construct a building to store the picnic tables and chairs that now take up so much space in the west end of the greenhouse. By moving them out of the greenhouse, we will gain the additional room needed to increase the number of propagation benches in the greenhouse, thereby gaining the space to improve our plant inventory.

June also marked the beginning of the new Speaker's Bureau. Neil Cochran and Deb Martin have started the training sessions for this important arm of the Association. Dirk Aaron and his staff will eventually manage the Speaker's Bureau, since they receive essentially all of the requests for speaker services. I would like to see all our Master Gardeners become a part of our newfound community, friendship, and horticultural opportunity, I invite you to come and join us. By raising our banner and running with it, we will truly be able to engage our mission: "to increase horticultural information to the community; to improve the quality of life through projects". I think that we will soon be poised to begin taking our message to the communities of Bell County. As I previously said, "Whenever anyone thinks 'plants', I want Bell County Master Gardeners to be on the tip of their tongue."

**Gy Okeson
President BCMGA**

Salado Garden Club Invitation

BCMGA has received a gracious invitation to attend a seminar by John Dromgoole from Austin at the Salado Garden Club in Salado.

***The Salado Garden Club is pleased to announce the appearance of John Dromgoole for a speaking engagement Tuesday, October 10th.
The free seminar will be held from 10 A.M. until 11 A.M. at the
Salado Civic Center, 511 Main St., Salado.***

John Dromgoole is the owner of the Natural Gardener Nursery and Lady Bug Natural Brand. He has been deeply involved in the advancement of organic gardening and environmental issues for over 30 years.

His nursery has been voted "Best Nursery" eight times in Austin Chronicle's Best of Austin poll. The gardens at the nursery have been featured in Texas Highways, Herb Companion and Fine Gardening magazines. John's radio show, Gardening Naturally, has been on the air for 25 years and is the longest continuously running, organic gardening talk show in the United States. He is also the host of Backyard Basics (PBS, Austin) television's weekly show Central Texas Gardener and also the Weekend Gardener on KXAN TV's Saturday First Cast.

In 2002 John was awarded the Dennis Hobbs Individual Achievement Award by Keep Austin Beautiful for his many contributions to the city.

For More Information:

Barclay McCort, President (254) 947-3617 or bam002@earthlink.net

From the Garden to the Vase

While attending the conference in College Station this year one seminar I attended was "From the Garden to the Vase". Just want to share one demo. You can form a long stem, such as a calla lily, by gently rubbing it in the palm of your hand until you have the curve that you want. Begin with a 2 to 3 inch vase with water to which you can add a 1/2 capful of Listerine, the old fashion kind, to kill the bacteria. Circle willow twigs in the vase to anchor your flower cuttings. For the "rose" on top, the night before you need to cut a head of red cabbage in 6 pie slices. Not all the way, it should remain anchored to the core. Turn the

cabbage head upside down in a pail of room temperature water.

Leave it sit overnight or until you need to use it. Drain it for a few minutes, finish your centerpiece. If you use a green cabbage, it will probably turn white.

Submitted by Deb Martin



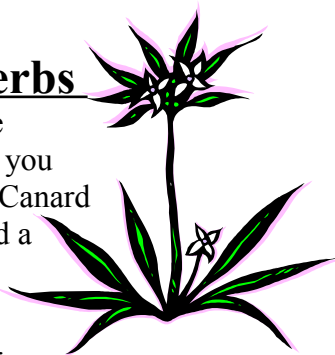
Submitted by Laverne Adams

Cooking with Herbs

If you were not at the June Master Gardener meeting, you missed a real treat. Janice Canard and Betty Nejtek presented a program on growing and using herbs (pronounced "erbs" by the way, no "h").

Using a power point presentation they taught the group a bit about each herb, including when to plant, when to harvest, and preferred conditions of each herb. They even had suggestions for companion plants. Among the tips we learned were these: Mid morning is the best time for harvesting herbs, pinch them back (especially basil, which is always eager to flower and go to seed), handle them gently, and be sure they are dry before you use them. With most herbs their flavor is at its peak just before they bloom. Fresh herbs are generally preferable to dried herbs. Many herbs can be stored for short periods in water in a cool place.

Herbs tend to grow best in average to poor garden soil, with good drainage. Most like full sun, although some may benefit from a bit of afternoon shade here in central Texas. If herbs



get too much shade, water and fertilizer, while they may be lush and green, they will produce less oil and therefore be less flavorful.

Three different methods may be used for drying herbs--hanging them, drying on a screen or using a dehydrator. If you are hanging them, it was recommended that you tie them in small bunches and enclose them in a brown paper bag. This keeps dust (and probably insects) away from them. If you are drying them on a screen, a layer of cheesecloth on top of the screen may prevent tiny leaves from falling through the screen holes.

Herbs can be used to flavor butter, oil, and vinegar in addition to using them in regular cooking. However, we were cautioned that it is very, very important that if you are making herb flavored oils a preservative must be added or they "must be kept frozen".

Then it was on to the fun part--cooking.

Chopping her herbs with the skill of an experienced chef, Janice prepared herb butter. She blended the herbs into unsalted butter that was at room temperature (but not warm enough to separate), then formed the mixture into logs which can be refrigerated or frozen. The herb butters can be used on meats, vegetables or breads. Some of us later found a bit of the herb butter left on her mixing bowl and sampled it. "Yum-o" as Rachael Ray would say. (Food Network watchers will know who I am talking about.)

Next Janice made pesto. Using basil, garlic, parmesan cheese, walnuts, and olive oil, she whirled them all in her food processor for a minute or two, then stirred the pesto over some pasta and passed out samples. Oh, was it ever good! And so easy.

Bunches of basil were available for those who wanted to take some home. Feeling very inspired I took a bunch. I can tell you her recipe works and is just as easy as she made it look.

For those of you who missed the class here are a couple of her recipes.

Basic Basil Pesto

3 cups fresh basil (or 2-2 1/2 cup basil and 1/2 cup of parsley)
 4 cloves of garlic
 1/4 - 1/2 cup of pine nuts or walnuts (preferably toasted)
 1/2 cup parmesan cheese
 1/2 cup olive oil
 Place all ingredients except oil in a food processor. Blend. With processor still running, drizzle in the olive oil in a small stream. Best served at once, or it may be frozen.

Sun Dried Tomato & Basil Vinegar

1/2 cup Sun dried tomatoes
 1 cup fresh basil leaves
 2 cups white wine vinegar



Bruise the basil. Warm the vinegar, and pour it over the tomatoes and basil in a glass jar. Steep for two weeks, shaking the jar occasionally. Strain out the basil, leaving as much of the tomatoes as possible. This is wonderful on salads with a good olive oil.

Submitted by Jane Capen

A.A.A.D.D.

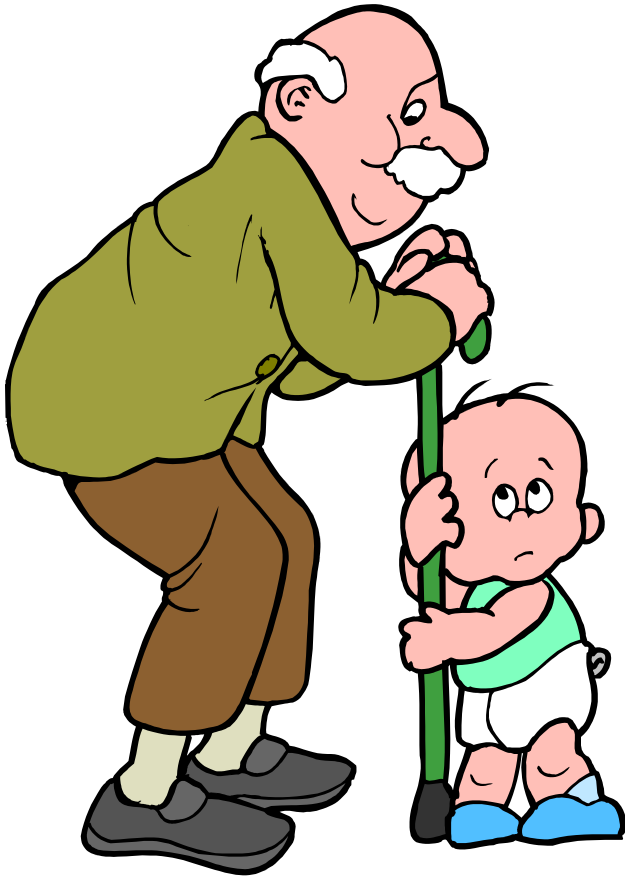
Age Activated Attention Deficit Disorder

This is how it manifests itself;
 I decide to water my lawn. As I turn on the hose in the driveway, I look over at my car and decide my car needs washing. As I start toward the garage, I notice there is mail on the porch table that I brought up from the mailbox earlier. I decide to go through the mail before I wash the car. I lay my car keys down on the table, put the junk mail in the garbage can under the table, and notice that the can is full. So, I decide to put the bills back on the table and take out the garbage first. But then I think, since I'm going to be near the mailbox when I take out the garbage anyway, I may as well pay the bills first. I take my checkbook off the table, and see that there is only one check left. My extra checks are in my desk in the study, so I go inside the house to my desk where I find the can of Coke that I had been drinking. I'm going to look for my checks, but

first I need to push the Coke aside so that I don't accidentally knock it over. I see that the Coke is getting warm, and I decide I should put it in the refrigerator to keep it cold. As I head toward the kitchen with the Coke, a vase of flowers on the counter catches my eye—they need to be watered. I set the Coke down on the counter, and I discover my reading glasses that I've been searching for all morning. I decide I better put them back on my desk, but first I'm going to water the flowers. I set the glasses back down on the counter, fill a container with water and suddenly I spot the TV remote. Someone left it on the kitchen table. I realize that tonight when we go to watch TV, I will be looking for the remote, but I won't remember that it's on the kitchen table, so I decide to put it back in the living room where it belongs, but first I'll water the flowers. I pour some water in the flowers, but quite a bit spills on the floor. So, I set the remote back down on the table, get some towels and wipe up the spill. Then I head down the hall trying to remember what I was planning to do. At the end of the day:

The lawn isn't watered
 The car isn't washed
 The bills aren't paid
 There is a warm can of Coke sitting on the counter, the flowers don't have enough water, there is still only one check in my checkbook, I can't find the remote,
 I can't find my glasses,
 I don't remember what I did with the car keys, and my neighbor called to tell me he turned off the hose that was flooding the driveway.
 Then when I try to figure out why nothing got done today, I'm really baffled because I know I was busy all day long, and I'm really tired. I realize this is a serious problem, and I'll try to get some help for it, but first I'll check my e-mail.

Don't laugh...if this isn't you yet, your day is coming!



**Growing Older is Mandatory
Growing Up is Optional
Laughing at Yourself is Therapeutic!**

Submitted by Jeanne Richard

COMMENTS FROM YOUR COORDINATOR

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