

# *TheBloomingBell*

*Bell County Master Gardeners Association*

*December 2006, Newsletter*



*Monthly Meeting*

*Wednesday, December 13th, 2006 – 5:30 p.m.  
Bell County Expo Center, Special Events Room*



## ***Christmas Dinner & Silent Auction***

Please mark your calendars for Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup> and make plans to attend our annual Holiday Dinner as we recognize members for their service hours and raise money through our Silent Auction. A special highlight of the evening is the Golden Trowel and Green Thumb award winners.

The event is being held at the Special Events room, Bell County Expo Center. Silent Auction items can be checked in with Violet Okeson and her committee starting at 5:30 p.m. Come early and enjoy extra time for visiting. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of B.C.M.G.A. and we hope to have representatives from all past classes. If you know of any inactive graduate, please share this information with them. It will be great to visit with fellow classmates again.

The Silent Auction offers a great selection of items for gifts or personal use. Success of the auction depends on members bringing items and also bidding on your favorites. Registration and the Silent Auction are from 6:00 to 6:45 p.m.

Dinner, catered by Cactus Jacks, will be served at 6:45 p.m. The menu is:

*Cranberry Stuffed Pork Loin*  
*(with a light maple glaze)*  
*or*  
*Pecan Crusted Chicken*  
*(with Creole mustard sauce)*

*Caesar salad, wild rice pilaf, roasted vegetables, sourdough bread, coffee or iced tea.*  
*Homemade desserts made by B.C.M.G.A. cooks will complete the meal.*

Cost of the meal is \$12.50 per person. Make your reservations today by completing the reservation form below.

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**B.C.M.G.A. Christmas Dinner**

### **Menu Selection and Registration – Circle one entrée**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken or Pork Loin

Guest: \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken or Pork Loin

Guest: \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken or Pork Loin

# persons attending \_\_\_\_ (@\$12.50 per person) Total amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return completed form with check made payable to B.C.M.G.A. by December 7<sup>th</sup> to: Marlene Gillman, 3553 Love Rd., Killeen, TX 76542

## **BCMGA Events Schedule**

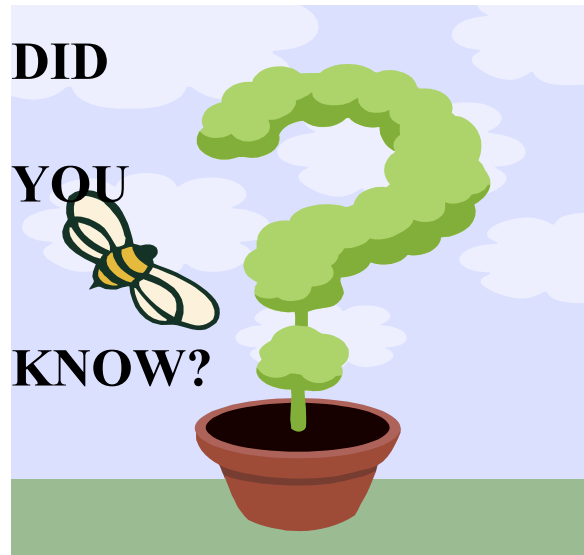
- Belton Greenhouse Workdays,  
Wed. & Thurs., 7 am, Belton
- Burger Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday
- December 13<sup>th</sup>, BCMGA Christmas Party
- January 3, 2007, New Class 1<sup>st</sup> Session

## **Garden Tour Volunteers**

Here's a big "THANK YOU" to all the garden volunteers. A special thanks to Jane Capen, Ginger Jones, Ilene Miller, Mary Lew Quesinberry, Louise Oldham, Deanna Rankin, Ursula Nanna and Cassandra Phillips for sharing their beautiful gardens with the public. They were challenged with the drought and intolerable heat, but every garden was ready for the garden tour. The Fall Garden Tour was a huge success because of these wonderful gardens, all the great volunteers and the great PR coverage the tour received.

For all the workers that worked getting the gardens ready and those that worked the day of the garden tour, we appreciate all that you did. We would like to thank Raymond Marr for the maps he created for us. They came in very handy. A big thank you to Mary Ann Everett for mentoring Rae and I.

***Thank you, Thank you, Thank you***  
Rae Schmuck and Sue Morgan



### **Leadership Belton**

Violet Okeson is taking the Belton Chamber of Commerce 'Leadership Belton' course as a representative of the BCMGA.

### **Floral Display Prize Winners**

On Sunday, November 12, from 1p.m. to 4p.m., I attended the Floral/ Theme display sponsored by the Killeen Garden Club. What a beautiful exhibition of plants, flowers, dinnerware, and stemware arranged to themes like super bowl. Our very own Marlene Gillman (Killeen Garden Club President), Sandy Jones, and Marty Portmann were among the exhibitionists and top prize winners. Congratulations to them all and thank you for the invitation.

***Submitted by Ursula Nanna***

## **President's Corner**

11/25/2006

With our Annual Christmas / 10th Anniversary Party lurking just around the corner and the first half of our fiscal year trailing behind us, I thought this might be an appropriate time to review the goals that I proposed when I became your President and assess how we are doing in bringing them to fruition.

Considering the perplexities that our organization experienced just before the start of this fiscal year, six months ago, I feel that, like the Phoenix of mythology, we are arising from our own ashes. The year began with many uncertainties. The new leadership of the greenhouse had to take over a job that had been floundering for several months and pump new **President's Corner Contd.**

life into the greenhouse projects just at the time we were facing a very long, hot, and dry summer. This is also the time of year that I like to call the "summer slump". Summertime is traditionally associated with a paucity of volunteer help. During this time they were faced with the task of starting a large number of plants from seed for the fall vegetable sale and propagating the plants we would sell at the fall plant sale - our two major fund-raising events of the fall. I have nothing but sincere respect for Lawrence Cox and Crystal Fisher. They proved that they were up to the task by putting in 40-hour weeks to keep the plants watered and growing.

Fortunately, it was not all "doom and gloom" during the summer. There were many who helped by coming to water plants and do other essential chores on days that are not considered to be "usual workdays". I think this dedication was a major factor in the new camaraderie that developed amongst those working in the greenhouse. Once again I saw smiling faces and heard happy chatter being the rule as the work progressed, rather than the exception. The result was record-breaking vegetable and plant sales, both in terms of plant quality as well as revenue generated. An integral part of the success was that, in addition, not only did we replant all of the plants in the greenhouse and hardening house using the new soil mixture introduced by Lawrence Cox, but also we were able to modify all of the propagation tables, changing them to sand tops. These new developments resulted in a 50% reduction in our water requirements (and days where watering was required). In addition, thanks to the hard work of Crystal Fisher, D.J. Campbell, and Karla Tomaka, we have started to develop a database that contains the names and

email addresses of our customers, both at the sales and the yard tours. This database will enable us to selectively contact our patrons when there are upcoming sales and education events.

Another positive program arose over the summer months was the inception and growth of the "Herb Group". Kim Pringle has led them into existence with a great program of learning and doing. As with most births, there have been some labor pains and frustrations, but none have been of serious importance. In spite of their birth pangs, the Herb Group now has three propagation tables inside of the greenhouse and two areas outside designated for herb propagation. In addition to educating our own Master Gardeners, their group has an excellent outreach program that provides education into the propagation and growth of herbs as well as their use in cooking. Their programs have been presented in the Killeen and Temple Ace Hardware stores, as well as at Master Gardener seminars and classes. Kim - thank you for your persistence and your leadership in this area. This fall we have changed the landscape around the greenhouse by first installing a metal storage building, that will be used to house the tables, chairs, grills, etc that now are clogging the inside of the greenhouse. We will soon be finishing the fence, which will close off the east end of the greenhouse area so that our property will be more secure.

In order that we "increase information to the community and improve the quality of life through horticultural projects." and "advocate gardening expertise with current horticultural information", as our mission states, I had proposed that we develop a speaker's bureau and a JMG program. Neil Cochran and Deb Martin have been very helpful in getting the speakers bureau off the ground. Dirk Aaron is currently starting to develop a list of speakers and topics and will administer the program through the extension office since they are the ones that get most of the requests for speakers.

Dirk and I are currently looking into establishing the initial training sessions for the JMG program. These sessions will be designed

to provide schoolteachers with the information they need to start JMG programs in their classrooms so that they can involve their students in the program. The exact details of the program will be disseminated as our plans mature.

Not all of the goals that I espoused last spring have been enacted by the Board of Directors. In an effort to reduce "mundane" tasks and "drudgery" details, I had hoped that we would obtain an automated watering system for the greenhouse. One of the complicating factors that I was too naive to see was the fact that we grow a large variety of plants in the greenhouse, each **President's Corner Contd.**

with its own water requirements. This makes an automated system difficult to manage, since a uniform program of watering will lead to some plants being over-watered and some under-watered. In spite of this, we are still looking and learning. A group of volunteers are currently looking at a misting system that was developed by a gardener in the Waco area. So far, its appropriateness in terms of our needs remains to be seen.

We have made some meager attempts at developing what Emilie Butts once called "a learning lab in the greenhouse", i.e. specific classes for our Master Gardeners covering "greenhouse techniques" (watering, propagation, disease recognition and treatment). I plan to promote these efforts with more vigor in the months to come. I would also like to see more teaching programs from the Earthkind Rose group led by Neil Cochran, as well as seeing "in-service" education being led by other volunteers who have developed their expertise in Xeriscaping, or other gardening programs.

My desire to begin doing more Master Gardener projects at non-extension locations has been slowed by the lack of an efficient process that would allow the Board of Directors to assess these requests. To facilitate this process, the Board is currently developing forms and writing a policy that will help select which projects are worthy and which are not. This policy should be in place by the end of January. The one major project that failed was the

Rainwater Harvesting Demonstration Program. This program was to involve collecting water from the greenhouse when it rained and then storing it for later use by the greenhouse. It would also demonstrate how rainwater collection could be accomplished in private homes by the homeowners. Unfortunately, both the planning and the initial execution of the plan were faulty. The program is currently tabled until the Board of Directors can reevaluate what went wrong and institute a better project design.

More than anything else, this year I wanted to "to bring the fun of gardening back to our volunteers". I know that, if I asked the NCMGA members "Are you having more fun this year with your Master Gardener activities?" I would Receive a variety of answers. Whatever the outcome of this poll would be, there is no doubt that many changes have taken place over this time, both physically and administratively. I would hope that these have made it possible for the majority of our volunteers to have more fun at our meetings and working in the greenhouse and demonstration gardens.

You can be assured that I will do everything I can to insure that this trend continues.

**Gy Okeson**  
**President BCMGA**

## **Silent Auction Alert!!**



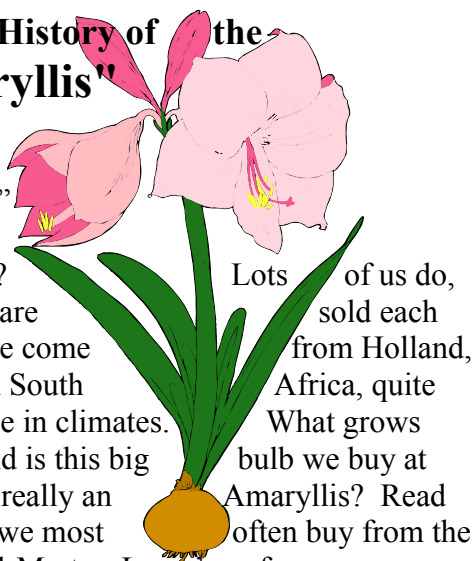
The committee for the silent auction is in need of items for "the silent auction". You do not have to bring them to us. All we need to know is



what you have to offer so we can have the bidding sheets ready the night of the party. Last year we made \$2500.00 on this one fundraiser alone! Won't you consider donating something to this project? Please let us know by Friday, December 8th. Contact one of the following committee members:  
 Violet Okeson [gokeson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gokeson@sbcglobal.net)  
 Rutha Leffel [rleffel@earthlink.net](mailto:rleffel@earthlink.net)  
 Mary Ann Everett [pma4514@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pma4514@sbcglobal.net)  
 (Or telephone them, using your membership handbook) Thank you for your donation.

## A Short History of the "Amaryllis"

Have you bought an "amaryllis" bulb for Christmas? Lots of us do, thousands are sold each year. Some come from Holland, some from South Africa, quite a difference in climates. What grows where? And is this big bulb we buy at Christmas really an Amaryllis? Read on...What we most often buy from the bins at Wal-Mart or Lowe's or from many garden catalogs is actually what is known as a Hippeastrum. True Amaryllis are a South African flower known as the Cape Belladonna, a late-summer flowering bulb. In accordance with scientific classification, the amaryllis family is Amaryllidaceae, and the scientific name for the belladonna lily is Amaryllis belladonna. The Hippeastrum is a genus within the maryllidaceae family and comes originally from South America. However, through the years, the two names have been substituted



repeatedly. Even Linnaeus lumped the two together under the general name of Amaryllis. In 1837, British scientist, the Honorable Reverend William Herbert, the leading authority on amaryllis in his time, grouped some amaryllis into a new genus that he called Hippeastrum, which continues today to be the correct nomenclature of this genus of cultivated amaryllis hybrids. Most of the time today, the two names, Hippeastrum and Amaryllis are used interchangeably for the large bulb so often seen at Christmas.

The name Hippeastrum comes from the Greek words "hippos" for horse, and "astron" for star, combining to mean "the horseman's star" or sometimes in more patrician circles as "the knight's lily" or "the knight's star". The star part of the name is fairly obvious from the coloring and petals. The horse part requires a bit more imagination. Some say the flower bud is reminiscent of a horse's head. Hippeastrums originally came from South America, they are reported to have been found from Argentina to Mexico. They began arriving in Europe in the latter half of the 1600's. We know that some form of amaryllis had arrived in North America by the early 1800's as it is mentioned in a letter by Thomas Jefferson.

Over the years, hundreds of hybrids have been produced, as breeders aimed for plants with more and larger flowers, a variety of colors, faster bloom times, and longer cut flower life. Hybridization was especially popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even Luther Burbank bred some of the plants. The Depression, and later the fuel shortages of the two World Wars brought much of the breeding, which had to be done in heated structures, to a near halt. Later, Dutch breeders revived the growth of the bulb, and still lead the world in bulb production. (The United States is the world's largest importer of bulbs.) In time, some Dutch breeders migrated to South Africa, and began growing and hybridizing their bulbs there. Hippeastrum that come from South Africa are generally available earlier and flower more rapidly than do the ones from the Netherlands, even though the bulbs tend to be

smaller and the stems often shorter. Hippeastrum colors include red, pink, white, orange, yellow and green, with variations of these colors via striping or edge coloring. There are five types: (1) single flowered, (2) double flowered, (3) miniature, (4) cybister, and (5) trumpet. Cybisters have very thin petals and are frequently described as spider like, while trumpets have flared tubular flowers. Currently, the single, double, and miniature are the ones most often found in stores and catalogs for the holidays. Hippeastrum are easy to grow, and can very often be induced to re-bloom. A simple, concise article on their care can be found at: [http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/county/smith/tips/flowers/](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/county/smith/tips/flowers/amarylliscare.html)

[amarylliscare.html](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/county/smith/tips/flowers/amarylliscare.html)

Your Christmas amaryllis can be planted outside after the danger of frost has passed. They like good soil along with good drainage. In our area of Texas they may be left outside or brought inside in the fall for another season of holiday bloom.

*Submitted by Jane Capen*

References:

<http://www.floralartmall.com/Amaryllis.html>

<http://www.gardenguides.com/books/amaryllisexc.htm>

<http://www.floridata.com/ref/h/hippeast.cfm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippeastrum>

## 2007 Class Orientation



Dr. Gy Okeson, president of the Bell County Master Gardener Association, welcomed new members of the 2007 Master Gardener class. The 26 members of the Master Gardener class of 2007 attended a two-hour orientation November 15th at the Bell County Extension

Office. Dirk Aaron, Bell County Extension agent, told the history of the Extension Service and explained the valuable service that the Master Gardener Association provides to the community. Mary Ann Everett and Mary Lew Quesinberry, co-directors of the new class, explained the curriculum and expectations of the class, which starts January 3, 2007.



The 26-member class will be required to complete 75 hours of education and 75 hours of service to receive their certification. The class runs from January 3, 2007 until May 16, 2007. Mentors will be available at each class to assist the directors and class members. Ginger Jones, chief mentor, explained the functions that the mentors provide, such as collecting and documenting homework and videotaping the class lectures. Janice Canard, the new class coordinator, introduced the class schedule. Drs. Doug Welch, Tony Provin, Bill Welch, Jeff Tomberlin, Don Renchie, Larry Barnes, John Smith and James Mccafee all of Texas A&M University will present 4 hour lectures on xeriscaping, soil testing, antiques roses, perennials, entomology, chemicals, plant diseases, turf grasses and rainwater harvesting. Travis County Extension Agent, Skip Richter, will lecture on organic vegetable gardening. Temple College horticulturist, Reid Lewis, will discuss native plants and pruning practices. Kelly Bender, with Texas Parks and Wildlife, will teach about native plants and the Junior Master Gardener

program. Other courses on botany, composting, propagation and herbs will be led Master Gardener specialists.

Two field trips are scheduled. Curtis Smalley of the Brazos River Authority will lead the class on a tour of the composting facility located on Hwy 93. The class will also visit the greenhouses and

gardens at Texas A&M University at Bryan College Station and the Antique Rose Emporium located in Independence.



Joan Hinshaw and Joyce Pack, Demonstration Garden Committee Chairs, spoke to members of the Class of 2007 during the new class orientation.

## **Greenhouse Happenings**



Greenhouse volunteers removed the shade cloth and stored it in the new storage building. It was a group effort with Karla Tomaka leading the crew untying the straps. Other members gently lowered the giant cloth and folded it accordion style. Neil Cochran, Johnny Buck, Lawrence Cox, Charles White and others rolled the shade cloth up and carted it to rest until next season. Other volunteers propagated plants and mowed the lawn. Nolan and Linda Young rewarded all this hard work with a delicious hamburgers spread. Chocolate cake, German potato salad, chocolate chip cookies, chips, dips and fresh vegetables were added to the feast and fellowship.



Neil Cochran and Johnny Buck moved the shade cloth to the new storage building to be stored until next spring.



Greenhouse Chairman, Lawrence Cox and



Master Gardener Harriet Jackson, class 2002, discussed horticulture in the Master Gardener greenhouse.



Carol Holcombe, Golden Trowel/Green Thumb Award Chairman, and Emily Butts, on the BCMGA board of directors, both greenhouse volunteers tried to identify a plant by smell.



Always smiling, Jean Kitchens propagated new plants in the Master Gardener greenhouse. Jean is a faithful greenhouse volunteer and also Production Coordinator of the Blooming Bell.

**BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ARE SPONSORED BY TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OF TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY  
1605 N. MAIN ST, BELTON, TEXAS 76513  
254-933-5305**

### **Newsletter Staff**

#### **Reporting & Production:**

Jean Kitchens  
(254) 771-2942  
[Jeankitchens1@aol.com](mailto:Jeankitchens1@aol.com)

Laverne Adams  
(254) 791-3808  
[L16Adams@sbcglobal.com](mailto:L16Adams@sbcglobal.com)

Jane Capen  
(254) 939-3835  
[Janec1@clearwire.net](mailto:Janec1@clearwire.net)

**Editor**  
Jeanne Richard  
(254) 931-7228  
[Jeannerichard@hughes.net](mailto:Jeannerichard@hughes.net)



