

TheBloomingBell

Bell County Master Gardeners Association

January 2007, Newsletter

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, January 10th, 2007 – 11:00 a.m.

Bell County Extension Office, Belton, Texas

Guest Speaker

***Cathy Slaughter ~ Gabriel Valley
Farms***

***"Growing Lavender in Central
Texas"***



Plants available for purchase

BCMGA Events Schedule

- Belton Greenhouse Workdays,
Wed. & Thurs., 7 am, Belton
- Burger Wednesday, 1st Wednesday
- January 3 - New Class 1st Session
- January 10 - Herb Group Mtg. – 8:25 a.m.
- February 24 & 25 – Home & Garden Show
- March 17th – Spring Veggie Sale
- April 21st – Spring Garden Tour
- April 28th – Spring Plant Sale
- August 25th – Fall Veggie Sale
- October 20th – Fall Garden Tour
- October 27th – Fall Plant Sale

BCMGA 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Ninety -five Bell County Master Gardeners celebrated the 10th birthday of their association

at the Bell County Expo Center December 13th. The event was held in conjunction with their Christmas party and annual awards ceremony. Bell County Extension Agent Dirk Aaron and Bell County Master Gardener president Dr. Gy Okeson presented Service Awards to thirty-three Master Gardeners at the annual Christmas party December 13th at the Bell County Expo Center.



Master Gardeners Kimberly Pringle, Deanna Rankin, Jeanette Karr and Carol Holcombe

receive 5 year pins



Johnny Buck and Neil Cochran received the Golden Trowel Award. Other Master Gardeners choose the recipients of this award for outstanding accomplishments to the organization and the community.



Marlene Gillman is shown with a worker from Cactus Jack's Restaurant. Cactus Jack's catered a wonderful meal of cranberry stuffed pork loin and pecan crusted chicken. Marlene with a tiny bit of help from her husband, created a charming group of three Christmas trees used to decorate each table at the Christmas party. She single-handedly decorated the room for the party. The table decorations, Poinsettias and airplane plants were given away as door-prizes after the event.

Mary Ann Everett, Joyce Pack, Joan Hinshaw, Lawrence Cox, Crystal Fisher, Carla Tomaka and Jan Anderson received the Green Thumb award. Recipients to this award are chosen by fellow Master Gardeners as well.



Johnny "Stonewall" Buck receives a special award presented by BCMGA president Dr. Gy Okeson. Bell County Extension Agent Dirk Aaron is in the background. The special award acknowledges Mr. Buck's 50 foot demonstration wall on the north side of the greenhouse. Master Gardeners Raymond Marr, Mary Ann Everett, Neil Cochran and Johnny Buck donated most of the materials used in the wall. D.J. Campbell helped in the excavation. The wall is inspiring and presents many possibilities of wall construction utilizing different materials.

Neil Cochran of Georgetown, and Louise Oldham of Belton, both BCMG past -presidents, earned recognition awards for 700 plus volunteer service hours. Johnny Buck of Florence and Mary Ann Everett of Temple both received certificates for 500 plus service hours.



Ten-year pins were presented to Ilene Miller, Clyde White, Bob Gordon, Charles Newsom, Dianne White Delisi, Terry Smith, Ann Lesmeister (not pictured). Awards were also given to 29 other Master Gardeners for 100 to 400 plus hours of volunteer service.

The event marked the tenth anniversary of the organization in Bell County. Bell County Extension Agents James Davis and Ilene Miller provided 50 hours of classroom training to the first Master Gardener class of 24 volunteers in 1997. In 1998 Bell County Master Gardener Association began participating in the Texas Master Gardener Association activities. The Bell County Chapter has twice been awarded first place for Outstanding Chapters of its size.

Mrs. Violet Okeson chaired the silent auction, which received over 100 donations, 31 of which were from area businesses. The silent auction is an important fundraiser for the non-profit organization. The Master Gardener Association is a volunteer development program offered by the Texas Cooperative Extension. The next class of Master Gardeners starts January 3rd. These volunteers will receive 75 hours of classroom training most of which is provided by Texas A&M professors. In addition they are required to perform 75 hours of volunteer service to become a certified Master Gardener. In exchange for their training, Master Gardeners work as volunteers to provide horticultural information to the community.



Dr Gy Okeson, BCMGA president and Lawrence Cox, Greenhouse Chairman, share a laugh at the Christmas Party/10 year Celebration.

*Submitted by
Mary Lew Quesinberry*

President's Corner

What a year it has been. 2006 will surely go into the history books as the "year of the Big Dip". There we were, flying along supposedly without a care in the world, when suddenly the Association tried to go into a crash landing. Fortunately the crisis was short lived and we quickly regained control just in time to go on to bigger and better things. I briefly reviewed this in last month's installment of the "President's Corner". In spite of the difficulties we experienced, I think we have done so well that, with your indulgence, I want to once again restate our accomplishments - but more concisely.

As an Association, we had:

- Record breaking fall vegetable and plant sales - both in quality of plants and income generated.
- Replanted all of the plants in the greenhouse and hardening house, using the new soil mixture introduced by Lawrence Cox, resulting in a 50% reduction in water requirements.
- Modified all of the propagation tables using metal and sand tops to improve

- our water conservation.
- Developed a database of our patrons so that they could be contacted whenever fundraising events occurred.
- Fostered the inception and growth of the "Herb Group" for in-service and out-reach education on the important topic of herbs.
- Purchased and installed a metal storage building so that the greenhouse could continue to be what it was meant to be.
- Developed a Speaker's Bureau to facilitate community outreach education.
- Developed forms and policy to facilitate the Board of Directors in their function in selection and oversight of outreach projects.
- Witnessed the completion of the stone demonstration walls between the greenhouses.

Most importantly, through all of this, there has developed a renewed sense of purpose and responsibility in the membership, which translates into "having more fun gardening". Hopefully this feeling will continue to grow and permeate into every facet of our Association over the coming year.

And now we have most fittingly climaxed this difficult, but rewarding year with what I feel was the best present the Association could have given their volunteers - an exceptional Annual Christmas and 10th Anniversary Party. The Association was blessed with nearly 100 volunteers who came to the Bell County Expo on December 13th to celebrate with their fellow gardeners. These friends and colleagues included representatives of each class since the inception of our Association in 1996. I was told that this was the largest grouping of Master Gardeners at one time under one roof in the history of the TMGA. I don't know if this was true, but it sure sounds good. The party was a night of exceptionally good food

and fellowship. Our members were thanked and honored for their hard work and dedication, and they were presented with awards to mark this happy occasion.

Our congratulations go to Marlene Gillman, who chaired the event. Frances Idoux, and her committee published an exceptional commemorative book marking the 10 years our Association has been at work in the community. It contains our history, with memorabilia that span the entire 10 years. This information was interspersed with sections containing gardening tips and recipes. These were provided by our members as found in past editions of our newsletter, the "Blooming Bell". The evening was "crowned" by an exceptional silent auction containing greater than 100 items, forty of them donated by local businesses. The revenue that was generated made this the major fund-raising event for the year. The Association is grateful to the hard work of Violet Okeson and her committee, consisting of Mary Ann Everett and Rutha Leffel.

President's Corner Contd.

Well, my lips are getting a little tired. Tooting one's horn can do that! That means it is time to stop reveling in the past and get back to the work at hand. Before we know it, spring will be here and it will be time to roll up our sleeves and go back to work. Some of the projects that we will be involved in are listed below.

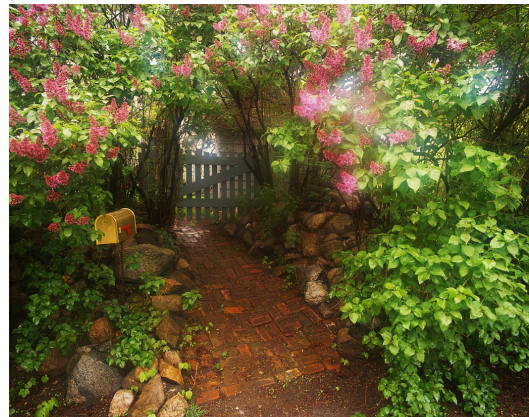
- The bids have been let for the new greenhouse fence, which should be in place soon.
- Our Awards Committee is currently hard at work on nominations for TMGA awards that are given at the State Convention. We will be entering competitions for the best newsletter (the Blooming Bell),

- the best graphic presentation (Composting DVD), Master Gardener of the Year, and the best exhibit (our rainwater harvesting exhibit).
- The Board will be considering a different rainwater-harvesting project using the storage building rather than the greenhouse.
 - A committee will be developed to start planning a JMG program.
 - The Landscaping Subcommittee of the Greenhouse Committee has been developing plans to improve the appearance of the area around the greenhouse, especially that portion to the west of the greenhouse.
 - Dates have been set for the spring vegetable and plant sales and the spring yard tour.
 - The 2007 Class will be starting January third. We are looking at an exceptional group of students this year. Our own Master Gardener Specialists will be doing more of the teaching. Graduation will be held May 16th, 2007.
 - We will again be playing an active role in the Bell County Home and Garden Show, which takes place February 24-25. We will have two booths for the 2-day event - one being "Ask the Master Gardener" and the other being our "Rainwater Harvesting for Homes" exhibit. In addition, there will be seminars on two important topics.
 - Thanks to our web-master, Dean Franklin, we will see our web site change significantly into an instrument that will play new roles in directing our

Association's activities. A committee has been developed to oversee this change.

It looks like there will be plenty on our plate to keep us busy over the next six months. In the meantime, I want to wish all of you a belated very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from your Board of Directors and myself.

Gy Okeson
President BCMGA



**"Nothing seems worth
doing but the laying out
of gardens"**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Silent Auction Activity!

Violet Okeson, Silent Auction Chairman, and her committee charmed wonderful auction items from 33 local businesses. Master Gardeners generously donated as well and the auction items totaled over 100. A wide variety of items tempted the bidders. Gift certificates, beauty supplies, gift baskets, veterinary services, massages, statuary, books, a ladder from Sears, fold-up camp chairs, picnic containers, wine, mint coins, pottery from Owl Creek Pottery,

saving bonds, gardening supplies, original artwork from Deb Martin, handmade stitchery and much more.



Master Gardeners crowd around the Silent Auction check-out table following the "best ever" Christmas party.



Marlene DeLillo, Mary Ann Everett and Violet Okeson, prepare to cash out the winning bidders at the very successful Silent Auction.

OOOPS! *Someone went home with the wrong garden statue! If you would return the Garden Elf from Charlene's, you can pick up the St. Francis Statue. The Garden Elf as well as the second Super Star Car Wash belongs to Ilene Miller. (The item bid sheets for the St. Francis Statue were not returned, so we don't know who has them).*

Violet Okeson Silent Auction Chairperson



Dianne White Delisi, Ilene Miller and Clyde White visit at the BCMGA Christmas party. All three received 10 year pins. Master Gardener and State Representative Delisi donated 3 hotly sought after items to the silent auction, a hand-carved Texas- shaped paper weight carved from granite used as steps to the Texas Capitol, a Texas flag to be flown over the State Capitol on a day designated by the winning bidder and a gold plated Christmas ornament of the Texas Capitol.

2007 Salado Garden Tour

This year's tour will be held on Saturday, May 12 from 10 am to 4 pm and on Sunday, May 13 from 1 to 4 pm. As always, we are looking forward to working with the Bell County Master gardeners as many have been our garden volunteers in past tours. Gardens featured this year and other details will come later but I wanted y'all to have advance notice of the dates.

Margaret Williamson
Publicity chair, 2007 Salado Yard & Garden
Tour - mwsalado@earthlink.net 254.947.8887

Class '07 Schedule

1-3-07

Overview of Master Gardening Xeriscape – Dr. Doug Welsh – T.A.M.U.

1-10-07

Propagation and Greenhouse Workshop
BCMGA Specialists

1-17-07

Basic Botany & Jr. Master Gardening Overview
Lisa Wittlessey – T.A.M.U.

1-24-07

Soil Testing and Basic Soils
Dr. Tony Provin – T.A.M.U.

1-31-07

Antique Roses and Perennials
Dr. Bill Welch – T.A.M.U.

2-7-07

Garden Entomology
Dr. Jeff Tomberlin – T.A.M.U.

2-14-07

Understanding Chemical Laws & Labels
Dr. Don Renchie – T.A.M.U.



2-21-07

Botany II (Plant Structure, Function, Hormones
and Nomenclature)
Deb Martin – B.C.M.G.

2-28-07

Plant Diseases
Dr. Larry Barnes – T.A.M.U.

3-7-07

Vegetable Gardening (Understanding Organics)
Skip Richter – County Agent

To the BCMGA Membership,

You are invited to audit any of the classes. Remember, you receive credit for educational hours. All classes begin promptly at 1:00pm and conclude at 5:00. Please arrive prior to start of class, do not 'visit' during the class, etc. If you wish to audit a class, please let a Class Director know prior to the class. Class Directors for 2007 are; Mary Ann Everett pma4514@sbcglobal.net, Mary Lew Quesinberry quesin@vvm.com

3-14-07

Oakwilt & Earthkind Roses
B.C.M.G. Specialists

3-21-07

Gardening w/Native Plants & Wildlife
Kelly Bender – TX Parks & Wildlife

3-28-07

Turf grass
Dr. James McAfee

4-4-07

Native Plants and Pruning Basics
Reid Lewis

4-11-07 Fieldtrip

Texas A&M Gardens,
Antique Rose Emporium

4-18-07 Fieldtrip

Brazos River Authority – Curtis Smalley
Composting – Gy Okeson – BCMG

4-25-07

Water Issues – BCMG Talent
Rainwater Collection System Demo –
John Smith – T.A.M.U.

5-2-07

Ag Day – Bell County Expo

5-9-07

Growing and Using Herbs –
J. Canard & B. Nejtek – BCMG

Class Evaluation and closing
Bell County Master Gardeners

5-16-07

Graduation - 11:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Hellebore--A Flower in winter

January. It is a somewhat barren month for many perennial plant lovers. Sure there is green, one may even see an occasional bloom on a hardy rose, but for the most part, the garden often looks kind of bleak, or at least boring. But wait, in the beds of some gardeners, if you look a little closer you may find a flower blooming, down close to the ground. Not a big attention grabbing bloom, indeed, it often turns its little flower face toward the ground, but a flower just the same. If you see a blossom like this, you are very likely looking at a hellebore.

The hellebore is a member of the family Ranunculaceae, which also includes more common garden flowers such as buttercups, columbines, and nigella. Its evergreen foliage consists of compound leaves with five to eleven dark green leathery lance shaped leaflets. Growing very slowly to a small rounded mound, hellebores prefer shade and moist but well drained soil. Appreciated by gardeners for its winter bloom time, the flower resembles a simple rose, two to three inches large, and having about five petals. Most often the flower is white or white with a greenish tint, but there are some pink varieties as well.

The two most common hellebores are the Lenten rose (*Helleborus orientalis*), and the Christmas rose (*H. Niger*). Often both of these are simply lumped together as hellebore, without distinction between the two. Less common, but more interestingly named is the foetid hellebore or stinking hellebore (*H. foetidus*) which is a smaller plant than the above two and has leaves which emit a foul odor when crushed.

However pretty the plant may be, gardeners should be aware that it is very toxic. Native to Eurasia, the hellebore is one of the classic four poisons according to the Greeks. (The other three are hemlock, aconite, and nightshade.)

Reportedly the ancient Greeks used hellebore to poison the wells of their enemies.



It has been used in miniscule amounts by homeopathic practitioners for various purposes including mental disorders and lice. Until the Mid-Eighteenth century it was sometimes used as a treatment for intestinal

worms; unfortunately the patient was nearly as likely to die as the worms for which he was being treated. The name "Christmas Rose" comes from a legend that a young peasant girl went to see the newborn baby in Bethlehem, and was sad that she had no gift to give him. An angel noted her sorrow and pointed toward the ground, where the hellebore flower suddenly bloomed, providing the girl with a gift. {Of a poisonous flower? Legend ignores this small detail.}

The hellebore can be grown from seed, but it is an exercise in patience as the seeds can take six to eighteen months to germinate, and may not bloom until the third or fourth year. It's much easier to simply buy a plant, although it may be difficult to find at local nurseries. Probably the easiest place to get a hellebore is from a catalog like Wayside Gardens or Plant Delights Nursery, each of which carries several varieties of this lovely winter blooming flower.

References:

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

<http://www.gardenworld.co.uk/hellebore.asp>

<http://www.hellebores.org/hellebores.html>

<http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants/christmasrose/christmasrose.html>

Submitted by Jane Capen



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