

TheBloomingBell

April 2007, Newsletter

*Bell County Master Gardeners
Association*

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, April 11th, 2007 - 11:00

a.m.,

Bell County Extension Office

Bonnie & Leroy Sladek

Olde Thyme

Nursery



Present - Compost tea.

BCMGA Events Schedule

- Belton Greenhouse Workdays,
Wed. & Thurs., 7 am, Belton
- Burger Wednesday, 1st Wednesday
- 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

President's Corner

I think we would all agree that the greenhouse and the work that goes on within it constitutes an important part of our education and fundraising activities. The funds raised by the biannual vegetable and plant sales allow us to exist and to do our community horticultural teaching and projects. Unfortunately, a pattern of volunteerism has developed which is self-perpetuating and has been disruptive to

carrying out our mission. I want to call attention to this problem so that we can make active plans to do something about it. The pattern I am referring to is the seasonal slump in the number of volunteers attending in the greenhouse and gardens each summer.

Traditionally, we always have an abundance of volunteers throughout the late winter and spring months. The greenhouse hums with students and volunteers, all learning and having fun doing what they like best - gardening. During these months we are able to plan and carry out lucrative vegetable and plant sales that sustain us and help pay the rent. Then, in late May there is graduation for the students, after which everyone thinks it is vacation time.

The problem is - it is not vacation time. If we are to present first class sales in the fall, seeds must be planted; plants must be propagated and grown. In the past this responsibility has fallen to a small number of individuals, often leading to their "burnout". If we could attract more volunteers through the summer and fall months, the work could be distributed more evenly. Doing away with the "summer slump" will be even more important this year because of the recent resignation for health reasons of Crystal

Fisher from her position of greenhouse production coordinator. Her talent and enthusiasm will be sorely missed.

To make working in the greenhouse during the summer months more palatable, the board is authorizing some improvements that should make it more comfortable for everyone. The first of these has already happened. At this time last year, we had to water plants 4 to 6 times a week through the summer. With the new sand filled propagation tables and the new soil mixture introduced by Mr. Cox, watering has been reduced to 2 to 3 times a week - 50% of what it was last year.

The second of these improvements is currently in the works. DJ Campbell is supervising the installation of two new fans at the west end of the greenhouse and increasing the power to the other 3 fans. When all five fans are running, you will feel a significant improvement in airflow, which will make it significantly cooler on those hot summer days.

The third improvement will be in your "pay". I will recommend to the Board of Directors that they reauthorize the "two for one" service hours starting the first of June and extending through the last of October. Last year this was a means of acquiring volunteer service hours towards your annual certification while spending less time at work. Last year it was helpful in enticing volunteers to help during the "summer slump".

The forth improvement will be to make the floors more comfortable to work on. The coarse gravel on the greenhouse floor is uncomfortable and often makes walking difficult without stumbling or tripping. Next Wednesday volunteers will come with their shovels and rakes to remove the larger rocks lying in the isles.

President's Corner Contd.

The isles will then be covered with fine washed sand, which will be porous enough to allow water to percolate through it, but provide a

smooth level surface on which to stand or walk.

The time is now to start looking at this problem and coming up with a solution. I am certainly open to any new ideas. In the meantime, we all need to rearrange our schedules so that our mission and goals can continue throughout the year.

One last piece of business - The next meeting of the BCMGA will be important for two reasons. We will be awarding five year service pins to those who did not receive them at the Christmas Party - and - it will be time for the annual election of board members. See you there.

Gy Okeson
President BCMGA



Greenhouse Committee

Meeting Minutes

The Greenhouse Committee met March 28, 2007, at the Extension Office. Attending were: Gy Okeson, Karla Tomaka, Mary Lew Quisenberry, Lawrence Cox, Kim Pringle, Judy Herrmann, Veda Capps, Ken Ricky, Dan, Johnny Buck, Fran Sheppard, Sandi Revelle, Bernadette Hurta, Mel Myers, Annette Ensing, Laverne Adams, Gary Slanger, and Charles Newsome, and Jane Capen.

Karla Tomaka opened the meeting.

Hardhat Crew: Karla publicly thanked them for all their hard work on the last Burger Wednesday. Also Johnny Buck, for his on-going landscape work. Mary Ann Everett has said that they are going to have to re-spray the planned landscape area for weeds soon. A new system being planned at the greenhouse will allow volunteers who come to sometimes work in the vegetable garden or in the new landscaping area, depending on what help is needed where,

assuming there is someone present in charge of those areas to oversee tasks. The idea is that not everything has to focus on what is happening in the greenhouse.

Herbs: Kim Pringle asked about the pile of soil by the herb bed. Johnny Buck said he thought it had to do with upcoming landscaping that would ultimately block view of garbage cans. Probably Mary Ann Everett's input is needed to know exactly where it goes. Kim suggested it would be nice to propagate herbs from cuttings. She would like to have another bed or two for propagation. Karla will look into seeing what can be coordinated to accommodate Kim's request. Lawrence Cox brought up the constant maintenance needed by cuttings, and that currently the herbs are being cared for by the regular greenhouse workers. Kim reported that we can buy herbs from an outside source (e.g. Garbrielle Farms) for \$0.99 and sell them for \$2, and it might be a consideration for the April plant sale. {Note: later it was decided that buying from another source and selling was "iffy". It would not sit well with local nurseries. It was agreed to talk it over with Dirk Aaron before going forward with this}

Production: Crystal Fisher has had to step down as production manager. Annette Ensing will assume the job as soon as she finishes her internship in May. Plans are in the works for an inventory plan so that we can see what plants sell the best and plan accordingly. Gy Okeson pointed out that we need to be sure that we are not perceived as simply another plant nursery with plants for sale. Our emphasis is on learning and training, not selling.

Burger Wed: It was suggested that at the next Burger Wednesday people come with wheelbarrows, rakes, and shovels, to be used to remove the gravel from the greenhouse. Charles Newsome will take it away on his trailer. The floor will be replaced with sand, to make it easier on the feet of people working there. Plant tables are being rearranged in preparation for the April plant sale. They are being

organized into logical groups of plants. (e.g. "deer resistant", "butterfly", etc.).

Greenhouse Cmte Mtg Minutes Contd.

There will be a "wish list" developed and put out for plants wanted for the greenhouse.

Currently the focus is on the upcoming plant sale, an inventory will be done before the sale. Seminars planned during the plant sale are: Oak Wilt (9-10), Earth Kind Roses (10-11), and Fire Ant Control (11-12).

There was a discussion of giving coupons at the yard tour for the plant sale. It is unknown just how helpful this was. Also discussed were what to have on the coupon (a certain monetary amount discounted, a percentage discounted, a free plant, etc.) No definite answer was reached.

Public Relations: Mary Lew Quisenberry said there will be advertising for the yard tour and plant sale. There was a discussion of putting the names of the nurseries who will have the brochures in the ad, in an effort to help people locate the brochures. Also suggested was a poster or some fliers at the Greenhouse and/or Extension office on the day of the tours in case people stopped there. Also brought up was the possibility of having someone at the Greenhouse to direct people or give tour brochures.

Expanded shale for veggie, landscaping and herb beds is coming in the not-too-distant future. Purchase will be limited to \$1000.

Lawrence Cox reiterated that the plant sale is April 28. We hope to have a good variety of plants that are in tune with what the public wants to buy. This time there were too many tomatoes leftover. Most leftovers were given to Master Gardeners. This give away led to a discussion on who might get free plants. There was concern that Master Gardeners might wait until after a plant sale to get anything not sold for free instead of having to pay for it. It was brought up that perhaps having a member sale would be a good option. Another question was about Master Gardeners buying plants before



Master Gardener and EarthKind Specialist Joyce (pure joy) Pack was one of the presenters in the EarthKind seminars given at the show.



Master Gardener Diane Wallin and husband Ken sit in front of their pick-up load of props that the talented Diane used to decorate the "Ask a Master Gardener" booth at the H&G Show.

Greenhouse Chairman Lawrence Cox, Master Gardener President Gy Okeson and Greenhouse Manager Karla Tomaka compare notes at the Home and Garden Show.



Barclay Art Competition

Master Gardeners Deb Martin and Crystal Fisher and 2007 intern Rowena Fengel have pieces displayed at the CAC in Temple. They were part of the Barkley Art Competition for 2007. The artwork will be displayed until March 23. Master Gardeners Deanna Rankin and Dyna Bailey were also involved in the competition as volunteers and participants in the silent auction.



Master Gardener Deb Martin's floral art displayed at the CAC in Temple as part of the Barkley Art Competition.



The above shows Deb's piece that won a "Blue Ribbon".



A talented Crystal Fisher stands with the sculpture she entered in the Barclay Art Competition at the CAC in Temple.



Master Gardener 2007 intern Rowena Fengel entered this "Longhorn" in the competition.

10th Anniversary Garden Tour

Change in line up

At this time, Louise Oldham is unable to be on the garden tour. She is taking some classes and will not have the time needed to prepare for the garden tour. Fortunately Mary Lew Quesinberry has opted to replace her in the garden tour. We want to thank Mary Lew for placing her beautiful yard on the tour.

The Garden Tour Committee

THANK YOU!

Rae and I would like to thank the Master Gardeners that have volunteered their yards for the 10th Anniversary Garden Tour. It takes a lot of time and effort preparing for the garden tour. If you've ever been on the garden tour, you know how much time it takes. So here is a big thank you to Jane Capen, Beverly and Vernon Chenoweth, Mary Ann Everett, Ginger Jones, Ilene Miller, Guy and Violet Okeson, Mary Lew Quesinberry, Deanna Rankin.

Rae and Sue Morgan

Herbies Go to Round Top



On February 27, five friends (Betty Lowe, Susan Firth, Kim Pringle and two guests) traveled to Round Top for a delightful day of weeding, wandering and wantonness in the gardens of

Festival Hill. Greeted
by Henry Flowers,
curator for the

Gardens, and warmly welcomed by already hard
at work volunteers from the Herb Society of
America, Pioneer Unit.

We got right to work on a lovely bed filled with
cilantro, rosemary, brightly blooming calendula,
forsythia, lavender (appropriately called
Pringles Summer Sweet) and more!

Unfortunately much of the 'more' was what
they referred to as 'velcro plant' that lovely
hardy sticky plant that spreads like wildfire! I'm
sure it's the source of a few itchy rashes in the
group.

After hours of happy weeding, we broke for
lunch. Garnishing our sandwiches with fresh
lettuce plucked from the beds, we ate and
chatted. After lunch, Henry gave us the grand
tour of Festival Hill. Begun with just 6, the
property now sits on over 200 acres. The
grounds are broken into themed gardens. Our
first stop, "The Pharmacy Garden."

Divided into beds by regions, the lush beds of
the Mediterranean countries were in their glory.
Filled with sages, thymes (a wide variety with
an especially lush Rose Petal Thyme), rosemary,
horehound, foxgloves, so many varieties,
textures and aromas. A new favorite, the Zatars.
Other beds still sleeping held medicinal plants
representing China, India, Africa, South
America and Mexico. Henry encouraged us to
take cuttings (he didn't have to ask twice!).

A quick loop in front of the Lakeside Gardens
showed just a few of the 90 (yes ninety!)
varieties of rosemary on the property, one of his
favorites, "Spice Island". We continued our tour
into the Greenhouse, where we again met
Henry's only assistant, a lovely young gal of 78,
watering. Many of the tropicals are kept here to
move out into the gardens when weather
permits.

Next onto the Cloister Gardens, where every
plant has a tie to the Virgin Mary.

Breathtakingly beautiful these beds are lush
with texture and color, including a full bed of
Turk's Cap! The man-made rock walls are a

work in progress; no project is done at Festival
Hill with out full funding. Nonetheless, still
beautiful in their unfinished state.

Our group was absolutely amazed and refreshed
as we could see herbs used routinely as
landscape material. Flowing freely amid bushes
and grasses, not strictly for a kitchen or cooking
garden.

We finished our day with a tour of Menke
House and Edythe Bates Old Chapel and back to
the beds for more cuttings. Piling into the car for
home, we were tired and content and oh, so
inspired!

Thanks to Kim for driving and to MaryAnn for
note taking. And to Henry Flowers who, despite
his massive workload, spent hours with us!
Words alone do not describe this wonderful
property. While the buildings are not always
open to the public, the gardens are! Plan to visit
there soon!

Just a few noteworthy favorites: Pineapple Sage,
Lemon Savory, Salvia Officinalis (one of 200
varieties of Salvia on the property), Pringles
Summer Sweet Lavender, Spice Island
Rosemary, Bouncing Betty, Veronica, Soapwort.
Visit their website for more details,
www.festivalhill.org

Submitted by Susan Firth

Columbine

One of the most welcome spring flowers for
many is the columbine, particularly our eye
catching, bright yellow Texas Gold variety. It
usually begins blooming in March, and with
careful deadheading may continue to bloom

through May. Columbine will also bloom in some shade, making it especially attractive to many gardeners. A tough plant, seldom requiring pesticides, Texas Gold Columbine is the first perennial to receive the “Earth-Kind” label from the Extension Service in Texas. Of course, Texans are not the first to enjoy this flower. The state flower of Colorado, columbines have been known to other people and cultures for centuries. In other parts of the world they come in different colors, different forms. They may be red, blue, white, purple, or a combination of colors, single or double. Some varieties thrive in sunny sites. As a garden plant the earliest reference to columbine can be found in a painting, *Paradiesgaertlein* (Little Paradise Garden) by an unknown artist about 1410. In 1613, the *Hortus Eystettensis*, an early botanical tome, recorded 12 cultivated varieties. In the 19th century the North American columbine had become quite popular in European gardens, but was out of favor by 1900, being considered too “old fashioned” for stylish gardens. There are several interesting and diverse legends and symbols associated with this flower which has been known by such names as “granny bonnets” “Venus plant”, “Jack-in-Trousers”, “European Crowfoot”, and “Mary’s Bells”. The oldest myths relate the columbine with the Norse goddess Freya, the goddess of love and fertility. Over time the myth and symbolism was appropriated by the Christians and the symbolism shifted to the Virgin Mary.

According to Christian myth, columbine was said to have sprouted where Mary’s feet touched the earth on her way to visit Elizabeth, and was symbolic of her innocence. The flowers were also thought to resemble a covey of doves, and doves were representational of the Holy Spirit. Over time, however, this meaning changed considerably. By the seventeenth century the columbine was a symbol of cuckoldry and a woman who received a bouquet of columbine was considered to be unfaithful or wanton, quite a deviation from its earlier meaning.

The name itself, both the Latin “*Aquilegia*” and more common “Columbine” have a variety of possible meanings, and the most accurate meaning of the plant’s name is uncertain. *Aquilegia* is Latin for eagle and the plant may have been thought to resemble the talon of an eagle. Then again, the name may derive from *aqua*, the Latin name for water and *lego*, Latin for “collect” referring to the flower’s ability to hold either water or nectar. *Columba* is the Latin word for dove or dove-like and it has been said that the flower petals resemble a circle of doves. Finally, the Saxons called it “culverwort”, with *culfre* denoting pigeon (similar to dove) and *wyrt* meaning plant. Columbine has been used in the past for a number of medicinal purposes; this despite the fact that the plant is considered poisonous. Among the maladies it has been used to treat are kidney stones, sore throats, measles, small pox, head lice, infertility, impotence, and plague. While some sources say that heating and/or drying eliminates the poisonous properties, it’s probably not worth the risk. Far better to enjoy the columbine for what it is -- a beautiful tough perennial that bloom in shade, is disease resistant, and produces enough seeds to share. Not only that, it makes a good cut flower. Best cut when half of the flowers are open, it is lovely in an arrangement.

Just do not give a bouquet of columbine to a woman familiar with its seventeenth century meaning.

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Submitted by Jane Capen

VEGGIE SALE 2007



Master Gardener 2007 interns Rowena Fengel
Dru Buuck work at the Greenhouse Info. Desk.

Cox's soil recipe and the modified planting
tables produced abundant, healthy vegetables.



Master Gardener Sue Morgan stuffing her trunk
with goodies from the Veggie Sale.



Tiger Town 4-H members, Katherine and
Dorothy Wood sold hotdogs, drinks and donuts
to hungry shoppers at the Veggie Sale.



Greenhouse Manager Karla Tomaka organized
the most successful plant sale ever. Karla and
her dedicated volunteers had a steady stream of
customers



Greenhouse Chairman. Lawrence Cox explains
the mysteries of tomatoes to customers. Mr.



Master Gardeners Clyde White of Temple and John Womack of Georgetown take a much needed coffee break during the busy Veggie Sale.



Master Gardener 2007 intern Rowena Fengel of Temple makes a point during her presentation at the ABC's of Herbs seminar. Master Gardeners Susan Firth of Georgetown, Kim Pringle of Temple and Kathy Cemper of Florence were also presenters at the popular herb seminar. The Herb Ladies, lead by Kim Pringle, meet the second Wednesday at 8:30.



BURGER WEDNESDAY

Burger Wednesday is coming again! Our next Burger Wednesday is April 4th. Nolan will be our master of ceremonies at the grill

The project for the day will be to move the gravel out

of the greenhouse and sand into the greenhouse. This will make the greenhouse interior a lot easier on everyone's feet. In order to accomplish this, besides willing hands (and backs) we will need wheelbarrows,

shovels, and rakes. Please bring these items from home if you can. Charles Newsome will be hauling the gravel away on his trailer. As always, we would appreciate your contributions of a side dish, desert, or drinks. If you are able to bring something, please let me know at kstomaka@aol.com or 254 698-3367.

Thanks for your support!

Gabriel Valley Field Trip



The trip to Gabriel Valley Farm in Georgetown is set for May 4th, 2007. We are going to go by carpool and will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Extension Office.



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