



The Blooming Bell

December, 2011
BCMGA Newsletter

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Announcements



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Christmas party 6:30 pm	2	3
4	5	6	7 Work Day 9 am Board of Directors meeting 9 am	8	9	10 Cowboy Christ- mas
11	12	13	14 Work Day 9 am	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 	26	27	28	29	30	31

Upcoming dates to remember: January 11, General Meeting starts at 10:30 am, 10 am social
New Class Field Trip, April 18th

The President's Corner

December brings seed catalogues and holiday plants. I am a fan of both. The first seed catalogue arrived last week. I have made my list and of course as the season dictates, I have been checking it twice. I look forward to the arrival of other catalogues as I begin to plan my spring vegetable garden and alterations to the landscaping around my home.

Our Master Gardener chapter has a number of members who have taken the vegetable specialist training. We will all benefit from the information and tips they can provide. In

January, we will learn how to graft tomatoes at our monthly meeting. The November monthly meeting provided a number of us with pots of bulbs. The bulbs I planted are coming up and I now eagerly await the first blooms.

November was busy for our Master Gardeners with presentations at the Clearwater Symposium, a Whistle Stop Work Day, speaking engagements and orientation for the members of our new class. We have 18 students enrolled for the class this spring. If you have agreed to be a mentor, thank you.

Hopefully most of you attended the Christmas Party on December first. A lot of time and planning goes into our party. Many thanks go to the party committee. It is always a pleasant evening and an opportunity to see members we miss throughout the year. The Christmas party serves as our December monthly meeting. The monthly board meeting is early this month. It will be held on December 7th, to ac-



commodate holiday schedules. If you have not turned in a Volunteer Application Form to update your background check, it is time to do so. The deadline is December 9th.

Our new class will begin January 4th. Please introduce yourself and welcome our new members. The first volunteer opportunity for Master Gardeners in 2012 will be the Home and Garden Show in February. Volunteer schedules for this event will soon be announced. Plans for Master Gardener events next year are underway: Spring & Fall Plant Sales, possibly a garden festival, field trips, a fall garden tour, and many speaking opportunities. We are a busy chapter. Please remember to contact Gary Slanga when you receive a request to provide a program or to speak to a group. Gary is doing a great job of keeping our speakers bureau in order and the calendar current, but needs your help.

Thanks to all of you who gave many hours and a great amount of energy to the Bell County Master Gardeners this year. I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season with family and friends. I wish you a Merry Christmas a Happy New Year and an exceptional garden in 2012.

---- Laura

Photo above is from one of Beverly Wickersham's spring gardens; below are poinsettia's at Ellison's Nursery in Brehnam.

Photos by Beverly Wickersham and Terrie Hahn



Tarrant County MG Gives Workshop on Bulbs

- Terrie Hahn

Tarrant County MG, Clare Alford gave a hands on talk on bulbs at the November General Meeting. Clare is the daughter of Bell County MG, Laverne Adams. She gave a power point presentation dealing with different types of bulbs that do well in Texas and how to

plant them and care for them. Clare gave helpful hints like placing the flat side of the bulb towards the side of the pot. And when a package's directions tell you how deep to plant the bulb, you measure from the soil level to the top of the bulb. When you plant bulbs in your garden, it is wise to plant them in a wire basket with chicken wire on top so that if squirrels try to dig them up, they won't be able to get at them. The

scent a bulb gives off attracts squirrels and they'll dig them up even though they don't actually like to eat the bulbs. I left my pot on my porch overnight without protection and sure enough, something had dug them up, but had not eaten them. Seashells and cayenne



pepper are other deterrents for varmints.

Above: Clare Alford gives her power point; below: MG's checking out their bags of bulbs.

Continued on next page...



Workshop on Bulbs...continued

Keeping the bulbs overly wet will rot the bulbs. They like to be kept in the cool shade until they start to show green and then you should place your pot in the sun and rotate it occasionally so they grow evenly. They like just a little water soluble fertilizer such as 7-11-7.

You can also try placing bulbs in water in a vase on



Above: Sopia Gomez and Diane Calderwood show off their finished pots. Left: Laverne Adams shows Annette Ensing, Laura Jung and Beverly Wickersham how to plant the bulbs; Below, MG's working at getting those blue gloves on.



top of several inches of pebbles. Fill water just to the top of pebbles so that the bulbs are not sitting in water. Use a vase that is tall enough to support several inches of the stems once they come up.

For the pots we planted, Clare provided us with the following bulbs: Ipheion, Muscari, Narcissus Grand Primo, Hacinthoides, Narcissus Quail and Brodiaea. We placed a weed block on the bottom of the pot, then pebbles for drainage and potting soil with the largest of the bulbs deepest. We had three layers of bulbs in the one pot. The top was covered with mulch.

Clare put in a great deal of time putting together the individual bags of the layers of bulbs for each person and preparing everything else needed for this project. We are very thankful to her for a great project!



Check out the following page to find out why your bulbs may not be blooming!

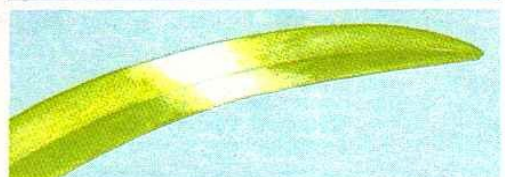
Photos by Gail Christian.

Bulbs...continued



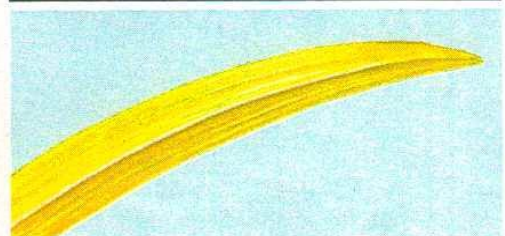
There are many reasons why a garden plant may fail to bloom. A severe attack by one of the pests or diseases on the previous pages may be the culprit, or it may be due to too much shade with light-loving varieties. An unusually late frost or growing a rather tender variety on a cold and exposed site may be the cause. Sometimes there is no obvious reason as with 'grassiness' of Narcissi when the bulb produces lots of grass-like foliage but no flowers. The most likely cause of bulbous plants failing to flower is the use of offsets which are below flowering size. To avoid trouble make sure that you buy good-sized bulbs or else you should be prepared to wait a year or two for blooms if you plant small offsets. If a clump of permanent bulbs are blind during the expected time of flowering then lift the clump and divide the bulbs at the recommended planting time

COLD DAMAGE



Hardy bulbs should not be affected by winter's frost and rain provided that the soil is free-draining. A sudden cold snap in spring, however, can damage developing leaves and shoots by destroying chlorophyll. The affected leaf, when it expands, will have lost part of its green colouration. It may be yellow-edged or almost completely white — Narcissus foliage is marked with a white band. Pick off badly affected leaves

CHLOROSIS



Yellow or unusually pale leaves are generally a symptom of a pest, disease or cultural problem rather than being a specific nutrient deficiency as with Rhododendrons, Heathers, etc. Poor drainage, eelworm and attack by underground grubs are common causes — the answer is to correct the underlying problem

Yellow leaves: Draughts are the usual reason. Other possible causes are incorrect watering and keeping the bowl in a spot with insufficient light

Buds fail to open: Water is the problem here. Erratic watering can cause buds to die without opening — so can wetting the buds by watering carelessly

Erratic flowering: The most likely reason is that the bulbs were either different in size or vigour. If the bulbs were evenly matched then the probable cause was failure to turn the bowl occasionally

Long, limp leaves: A clear sign of keeping the bowl in the dark for too long. Another possibility is too little light at flowering time

Stunted growth: The usual reason is that the bowl has not been kept in the dark for the required period — the shoots should be an inch or two high before being exposed to light. Another cause is dry compost

No flowers at all: There are several possible reasons. The trouble may start at planting time by using undersized bulbs. Keeping the bowl too warm or bringing it too quickly into bright sunlight will have this effect. Dry compost will also inhibit flowering

Deformed flowers: A clear symptom of keeping the bowl too warm during the plunging period. At this first stage the temperature should be about 40°F (4°C) — do not keep the pot in a stuffy cupboard or sunny room even if unheated

Rotting flowers: Overwatering is the problem. A bowl without drainage holes kept under cool conditions can easily become waterlogged — take care. Remove excess water by carefully tipping the bowl

Queen's Wreath and Perennial Morning Glory

by Jann Dworsky

I have a terrible weakness for any kind of vine! These are photos from this October of the vines on our house. These vines go all across the front and are delightful from midsummer until a hard freeze. The first two Queen's Wreaths I bought from Alvin Simcik about 12-15 years ago and they were about 3 inches tall, but have grown quite a bit since then!! I had admired Billy's grandmother's Queen's Wreath for years and finally found some to buy about 1996. I have wondered if some nice Czech lady had potted these up and brought them to Alvin, as I have seldom seen them for sale anywhere. There were only a few that day for sale.

Then in Gatesville, about 2001, the empty rent house next door to my husband's mother had runners of perennial morning glory going crazy along the foundation of the house and I "found" some and took it home. My theory was that later they would wish I had taken all 5 bushels of the vine. My mother had some of this vine at our old split-level house in Gatesville when I was growing up and she swore it traveled under the house (built on a rocky drop off) and came up on the other side!! Mama has warned me at least a dozen times not to let that morning glory "get away from me"!!! I explain that I have it trapped with cement surrounding it, but she is still confident the morning glory will have its way. Hers came up voluntarily out of a crack in the cement steps, climbed up on the side of the stucco house, and unfortunately onto our electric wire coming into the house. She and daddy were constantly worried the morning glory would get so heavy it would break the line. This was a very real fear! I trim about 30 runners off mine about once every 6 weeks, coming off near the roots. Unfortunately, it will root at



every joint if given contact with the soil. I am trying my best not to let it "get away". The morning glory had not hit its peak in these photos, and covers the middle section now with beautiful sky blue flowers. Oddly, when it gets cool weather the blooms turn purple and alternate warm nights, blue, cool nights, purple. Very versatile.

The morning glory vine only has one vertical trellis, as



it is so very invasive, and the Queen's Wreaths have four vertical trellises. We have the vines on vertical trellises that attach with a wire hook to the horizontal trellises. Billy made us 4 sections of trellis from welded wire fencing and put large plastic clad hooks

Continued on next page...

Queen's Wreath...continued

into the framework of the house about every 5-6 feet. When it rains and the wind blows they do not blow off the house. The vines are up under the vents of the house (coming out of the attic), and the warm air protects the vines sometimes until late December from freezing. When the vines are dead we just cut them to the ground and lift up, unhooking the trellises' from the house. We drag them into the drive and pull the vines off the trellises'. We do have to cut some of the most twisted vines off with clippers. It takes one easy afternoon, working at retirement speed.

I am happy to give starts of the Queen's Wreath or even the perennial morning glory to anyone feeling particularly brave.

The last one comes with a free "talking to" by my Mama!



Award Winners!

Editor's Note: With the Award Ceremony coming up this week, I wanted to make sure that two people got the recognition they so richly deserve. Gail Christian and Mary Lew Quesinberry tell us what's going on with the BCMGA through the many, many photos they take and send in for the Blooming Bell. The photos they take really do make the Bell special, and they deserve special awards along with a big THANK YOU!!!



Herbees Do It Again!

- Suzanne Boyer

Kim Pringle and Suzanne Boyer, in costume, presented the Colonial Gardens Power Point to the Newcomer's Club at the Wildfire Country Club on November 2.



End of an Era!

MG's got together to dismantle the Greenhouse on November 9th. Many Master Gardeners have learned how to propagate in this Greenhouse and have grown plants for plant sales in years past. It was decided that the Greenhouse was having too many repair issues and getting too expensive to run. It is up for sale now.



Photos by Gail Christian



Sustainable Living at Homestead Heritage

-Terrie Hahn

The MG field trip to Homestead Heritage Traditional Craft Village at Brazos de Dios in October was both informative and fun! We were given a tour of the Herb beds, the Weaving room, the Blacksmith, the Pottery workshop, the Mill and the Woodworking workshop. Demonstrations were given and questions answered at all of these areas. We saw shawls being woven, pots being turned, dovetail joints being made, grain being milled, metal key chains being hammered out and a tour of the herbs beds. We had a wonderful lunch made with homemade breads, cheeses and grass fed beef. An interesting place to visit. They also offer many classes in sustainable living like bread making, canning, bee keeping, woodworking and raising chickens. For those of you who missed this opportunity, check out their website at www.sustainlife.org



Participating in the field trip were Bernie Hurta, Laura Murphy, Gail Christian, Tom Christian, Mel Meyers, Don Wyatt, Sophia Gomez, Terrie Hahn, Bette Gilmore, Carole Klement, and Ursula Nanna.



The MG group getting a lesson on herbs; watching a potter being turned on the wheel; Bette watching a weaver in action!

Photos by Gail Christian.

Continued on next page...

Homestead...continued

In the top three photos, Don, Sophia and Mel look around the outside of the Grist Mill, while below, Ursula inquires about the way the mill grinds the wheat.

Photos by Gail Christian and Terrie Hahn



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Homestead...continued

Photos by Gail Christian and Terrie Hahn.

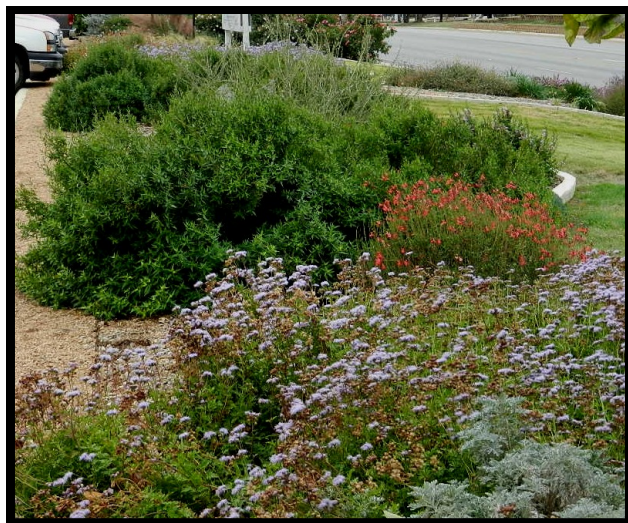


The group watching the smithy; then on to the woodworking shop where our guide shows us his handmade guitar; Gail Christian finally gets to pose for a photo instead of taking all of them; Laura and Bernie go shopping; and we're shown how to make dovetail joints by an 18 year old in-tern.



What's Blooming at the Extension Center?!

The Center's gardens are looking pretty good after the long hot summer! These photos were taken November 22nd.



Photos by Gail Christian

Announcements

January General Meeting Change

- **Bernie Hurta**

The **January 11, 2012** monthly meeting will start 30 minutes earlier. The **social will start at 10 am** and the **meeting will start at 10:30 am**.

We'll be grafting tomatoes with Gary and Annette. The earlier start time will give more time to clean-up before the New Class starts.

Refreshment Mentors for 2012 Class

- **Peg Fleet**

It's not too late! If you've been thinking about being a refreshment mentor for the new class, openings are still available. It's a welcoming way to acquire service hours, as well as one of the things that make the Master Gardener class stand out from other educational experiences. We need two refreshment mentors for each Wednesday class.

Dates still available for signup are February 15th and 29th, March 7th, 21st, and 28th, April 4th and 25th, and May 2nd (one refreshment mentor needed on May 2nd). We also have an opening for a traditional mentor on April 4th. If you would like to help but are not yet able to commit to a specific date, we do have a signup sheet for substitutes. Signup will be available until all slots are filled. If you'd like to put your name down but can't make it to a meeting or don't want to wait that long, please contact me at 254-542-1902 or fleetmm@earthlink.net.

Thank you to all of you who have already responded to serve as either a traditional mentor or refreshment mentor. I hope that your holiday season is everything that you would like it to be.

Save the Date!

Suzanne Boyer

The new class field trip will be Wednesday, April 18, 2012. Of course we will be selling tickets for those who want to go along. We are planning a wonderful day at three unique nurseries in Austin that have not been on the field trip itinerary before. You won't want to miss it! Look for details next year.

Herb Announcements

- **Kim Pringle**

Listed below are upcoming events. Because the herb email list now will be mainly for correspondence rather than education, I thought some of you might want to be removed. *If you want to be removed, please email me at kimberpringle@earthlink.net*

1. **Thurs., December 1, 2011** at 9:30 am. Temple Garden Club, at City Federation Clubhouse "Growing and Cooking with Herbs." The Club hostesses are making refreshments using herbs. Carla Harmon has volunteered. Please let me know if you want to participate. (And please forgive me if you told me you would help several months ago and I didn't write your name down.)

2. **Fri., April 6, 2012** at the Extension office. Deborah Northam is contact person 939-5323 or cell 624-5227. Let me know if you want to help with this one.

3. **17th Annual Herbal Forum at Festival Hill, Round Top, TX, March 16-17, 2012** "Roses are Herbs Too." I have reserved 4 rooms with 3 beds each. For those who haven't been, the registration fee last year was \$75 for classes and lunch on Saturday. There is an additional fee for optional workshops on Friday, usually \$25-35. I think we paid \$65 each for accommodations last year which included breakfast. And then we have to shop at the plant sale and do a self-guided garden tour. Plus "our" fabulous picnic on Friday evening beginning about 5 pm. You can drive down for the day on Saturday. I just wanted to make sure I have reserved enough beds for those who want to go - we usually send in money about the end of January. If you think you are interested, please let me know so I can get a tentative count.

Hope to see you at the **Herbal Tea on December 7**. Kindly RSVP to Frances or Terrie.

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Contributing Writers:

Laura Murphy
Jann Dworsky
Kim Pringle
Peg Fleet
Bernie Hurta
Suzanne Boyer
Terrie Hahn

Contributing Photographers:

Gail Christian
Jann Dworsky
Suzanne Boyer
Beverly Wickersham
Terrie Hahn

Editor:

Terrie Hahn

Proofreader:

Werner Hahn

Please submit articles and photos for the Blooming Bell to Terrie Hahn at:

moompie45@hotmail.com

321 Logan Ranch Rd.
Georgetown, TX 78628

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1605 N. Main St.
Belton, Texas 76513
(254) 933-5305



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