

The Blooming Bell

September 2013



**Bell County
Master Gardener
Association**



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Work Day 7:30 am State Conference Meeting 10 am Salad Wednesday 11 am	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Work Day 7:30 am General Meeting 11 am	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 Work Day 7:30 am	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Work Day 7:30 am Board of Directors Meeting 9 am	26	27	28 * Quesinberry garden airs on local stations-see page 5
29 *	30 *					

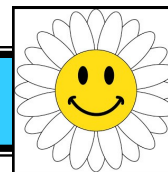
Upcoming dates:

Fall Plant Sale, October 5

State Conference, October 17-19

November/December Board Meeting, December 4

Christmas Party, December 5



Brainstorming!

Try This

- Margaret Leigh

Choose three and repeat and repeat and repeat.

In your landscape design, challenge yourself to create a bed of only 3 plant varieties. Carefully arrange and layer these plants for shape, texture and color.

In this design you can control water, sun exposure and care required for maintenance. Think shape, whimsy, color and uniqueness.

I am going to use this idea when I start a new bed. I'm going to use Dusty Miller, Russian Sage and something spikey. Probably Coral Yucca. All low water and low maintenance. Will do several clumps of each pattern to fill area.

Happy gardening!

Photo from web by Andrew Lawson



Check Out Texas Gardener

- Frances Idoux

In the July/August issue of Texas Gardener, Dr. Welch pointed out that succulents make excellent container plants, especially since they do not require frequent watering. The pictures with the article were beautiful, displaying different colors and combinations. These plants have another advantage for those of us whose gardens coexist with other creatures – deer customarily don't eat them. I have grown succulents, usually in pots by themselves, but decided to try some combinations in containers. The deer have tasted the portulaca, but discarded it when they decided that they did not approve of my choice of appetizer. These planters do not require a lot of water or attention, and they don't mind the Texas heat. So they have brought a measure of delight to my August garden. It is good to see something survive. But, Bob, would you please pray for rain again at the September meeting!



Photo of Elephant Bush, portulacaria afra by Terrie Hahn

When Nature Becomes Art

- Darla Horner Menking

I think it's great when two things I love come together. I feel like art and nature collide on so many levels. Most of the décor in my home is nature-based. I have fern fronds, leaf prints, sticks in vases, pinecone arrangements, tree and leaf sculptures, and well, you get the idea.

It's no different outside. I have a living bottle tree, a gazing ball, yard sculptures, stepping stones with sayings, and just this summer I got something VERY special... a tree sculpture. Yes, a tree was harmed in the making of this beautiful work of art, but it was going to have to come down soon anyway!

A few years ago, while vacationing in Galveston, I stumbled upon some beautiful wood sculptures. Jim Phillips, from Houston, is credited with many sculptures done on dead trees as a result of the devastation Galveston Island suffered after Hurricane Ike. When salt water covered the island, most of the trees died but were left standing and bare. Jim and two other chainsaw sculptors went to work, creating beauty from the destruction all around them.



If you ever go to Galveston, please take time to go on the self-guided tour of these beautiful wood sculptures. You won't be sorry you did.

This spring when I knew I was going to lose my 35 foot ash tree, I looked up Jim on line, read all about him and even saw a clip of him on the TV show "Texas

Country Reporter". I made contact with him, sent him a picture of my tree, explained to him what I wanted, we worked out the financial and logistical issues, and he came to Killeen. Three and a half days later, I had the most incredible wood sculpture of a Great Blue Heron with two Turtles in my front yard. I still look at it and can't believe how awesome it is.

I am also happy to say that Jim Phillips will be attending NatureFest 2014 right here in Temple. The Central Texas Master Naturalists are hosting it at *Bend of the River* in October, 2014. If you want to see a master chainsaw artist at work, that will be your chance!



Fe Fi Fo Fum, It's a Giant Ragweed

- Anonymous BCMG

These are Giant Rag Weeds with some poison ivy mixed in trying to take over my yard!



Editor's Note: These pictures from our mystery MG intrigued me, so I started researching the Giant Ragweed. I found the following articles on the web—very interesting and entertaining!

This Q & A is from Walterreeves.com (The Georgia Gardener)

Q: I have a very strange plant that has apparently killed or is stunting kudzu on my vacant lot.

This is not a joke.

The kudzu began healthy as usual this year, but was suddenly—and I mean suddenly—overtaken and stunted down to tiny plants around the middle of July.

What has taken its place is a very tall, stalky and dense plant with seed bearing appendages that point upwards in groups of three or four. These plants grow close together and get over 9 feet tall. But these plants have so suddenly supplanted the kudzu all around my house that I am worrying about exactly what they are.

I have never seen a plant take over so quickly. Also, I have never seen anything stunt the kudzu to this degree.

A: How well I remember as a kid blazing trails through patches of this tall weed, which had grown thickly in

Continued on next page...

Giant Ragweed...continued

an unused cow feedlot on our family farm.

It's giant ragweed, *Ambrosia trifida*. The stalks grew well above my head when I was ten.

You are right....it's so prolific that it can fight kudzu to a standstill.

Although grain and soybean farmers hate it, one author says it is great habitat for quail and other birds.

Once it comes up from seed, regularly knocking it down will interrupt its blooming and prolific seed production. Any young boy with a stick sword is perfect for this project.

Failing that, a non-selective weed killer like glyphosate (Roundup, etc) would kill it, particularly when young.

On the other hand, I definitely have warm feelings toward a plant that can fight kudzu to a standstill!

And from www.thecontraryfarmer.wordpress.com

The Irony of Giant Ragweed

In Gene Logsdon Blog on September 9, 2008

If you have never been frightened by a weed other than maybe poison ivy, you have not yet faced a battalion of giant ragweeds (*Ambrosia trifida*) advancing resolutely across your farm. They can grow to a height of 15 feet or more and in a stand so solid as to stop a 200 horsepower corn harvester dead in its tracks. They can overtake a field of knee high corn that has not been sprayed with the proper herbicide and literally choke it to death. In the lexicon of agribusiness, there is no adjective synonymous with 'vile' or 'pernicious' that has not been used to describe this hated plant of the grain fields. On top of that, it is a major source of irritation for hay fever sufferers. And now on the horizon looms the worst dream of the grain farmer: Giant ragweed is becoming immune to herbicides, particularly glyphosate, the active ingredi-

ent of RoundUp. Why the ancient Romans decided to call it ambrosia, that is, gift of the gods, is one of those mysteries that cries out to heaven for explanation.

I have a hunch that sheep could explain the mystery if they could talk. They love giant ragweed. They will go out of their way to eat it, even with a choice of lush fresh clover at hand. Interestingly, while they will nibble on common ragweed, they don't like it nearly as well.



What is going on here? After spending a long time watching my sheep and reading through the scientific literature, I finally found some clues, the kind that so often leads me to wonder if farmers shouldn't just take a deep breath, step back, and consider the possibility

that they are going in the wrong direction.

The seeds of giant ragweed are 47% crude protein. That is very, very high, much higher than any cultivated grain. What's more, these seeds, which the plant produces in prodigious amounts, provide, in the words of Roger Wells, a certified wildlife biologist and national habitat coordinator for Quails Unlimited, "the highest amount of metabolizable calories, more even than corn, soybeans, wheat, or any other grain that we know." What that means is that the seeds are very digestible. Quail or pheasants, in a good stand of giant ragweed will double and triple in population. (You can find all this and more at QuailRestoration.com on the Internet.) And what is the corn and soybean farmer's second worst dream? Now you can actually buy giant ragweed seed by the bag if you want to plant some to increase wildlife on your farm.

Primitive Americans must have known something we don't about giant ragweed. They nurtured it some 2000 years ago. (Giant ragweed is native to America.) They seem to have quit about 600 years ago and so far anthropologists don't know why. It is probably be-

Continued on next page...

Giant Ragweed...continued

cause, like modern man, they found maize (corn) easier to handle.

Is not giant ragweed worth more scrutiny? Why did the ancient Romans give ragweed the name, ambrosia? Might the old herbalists have known that the seeds really are a high protein food or a good medicine, and not just for birds? In the sense of homeopathic medicine, which sometimes is effective, perhaps an ingredient in giant ragweed can control the hay fever that the plants seem to cause. Has anyone tried that lately? Perhaps we are looking at the ultimate irony of over-civilized humankind. We are trying to kill a plant, an ambrosia, that is actually beneficial.

Out of curiosity, I ate a handful of giant ragweed seeds. I thought sure they would be bitter. Instead, they tasted sort of like wheat bran. I fed some to the chickens while they were penned in the coop. At first they were indifferent, but when I came back an hour later, they had cleaned up all the seeds and foliage I had offered them. What an irony. Here I have been feeding high priced protein supplement to them when they are probably getting all they need from the ragweed growing around the coop. I wonder if that is why they lose interest in eating domestic grains in the summer time.

Perhaps we should be growing fields of giant ragweed and grazing livestock and chickens on it. No mechanical planter, harvester or tanker truck of fuel would be necessary. Just turn farm animals in and let them have at it. Since the plants produce huge amounts of seed, enough would fall to the ground to grow a crop the next year. Since the seed heads stick up above the foliage, this new "grain" with its 47% very digestible crude protein would also stick up above the snow, making possible the great dream of the northern husbandman: year-round grazing.

I can see a problem if a demand for giant ragweed "grain" increased. I defy John Deere to build a harvester that could thresh its way through a really good stand of the stuff. Barring something on the order of a helicopter equipped with a vacuum sweeper, this "grain" would have to be harvested manually. But is that really a problem? It sure doesn't stop marijuana growers.

Succulent Flowers

- Terrie Hahn

I've become enamored with succulents-not the prickly types of succulents like cacti -the succulents that don't hurt if you brush against them! Most of the plants I have bloom at some time during the year. These are a couple of pictures of what's blooming right now.

To the left is Mother-in-law plant, sansevieria. This is the first time we've ever notice a bloom on it. Below is Red Tide, Echeveria subrigida. On the front page of this issue of The Blooming Bell is Echeveria Pulv Oliver.



Q & A

Editor's note: Let's learn from one another. Submit your questions and answers to me at moom-pie45@hotmail.com or call me at 512-863-9837.

Last month's question from:

- Terrie Hahn

Does anyone know what this is? We found this on a granite pathway. It looks as if it had been dropped by a bird. It looked like a flower top with a thick stem. This critter was trying to crawl out of it. It kept getting stuck and was tucking back in and pulling back out again. The flower top was about 4 inches long and the caterpillar or borer like creature was about 1/4 wide and had legs.



When we went back to see its progress, the flower and critter were gone. It was near a bird feeder. We think a bird saw it moving around and swooped down to eat it.

And the answer is:

- Gary Slanga

Looks like it might be a bag worm. They gather up leaves and sticks and form a cocoon in which to hide from predators.

And from www.asknature.org:

"The bagworm constructs a case around itself soon after hatching from its egg. The bagworm finds twigs or leaves in the tree or shrub where it feeds, and weaves these together in a silken case. As the bag-

worm grows, it adds to this 'armor.' The animal carries the protective case along with it as it moves around, poking out its head to feed.

"When the bagworm is full-grown, it uses silk to anchor the case to a branch or leaf. Sealing the opening with silk, it spins a silk inner case, or cocoon. There the caterpillar pupates. The adult male develops wings and leaves his cocoon to mate. The males will fly for a short time before mating. When the female is ready to mate, she will release a chemical that softens her cocoon so the male can make an opening and mate. The female lays her eggs inside the bag and then plugs up the hole made by her mate. When the eggs hatch they leave their mother's cocoon to make one of their own.

"The remarkable thing about the design of the bagworm twig casing is that it is designed to resist failure by crushing. The bagworm does this by placing the twigs in an ingenious pattern that, in section, forms a spiral configuration. Differing species apply this principle in various effective ways."



Photo of another bagworm, also referred to as bagworm moth in the Psychidae family we found on a schefflera. The pupate casing was inside. By Werner Hahn.

This month's question from:

- Terrie Hahn

Do Echeverias die after flowering?

Announcements

September Monthly Meeting

- Randy Brown

Carla Harmon will be speaking about the upcoming Plant Sale for the September General Meeting.

Grounds Committee Action

- Brenda Albro

The Grounds Committee will work every Wednesday in September. The 4th is Burger Wednesday and the plan is to have Salads for lunch. Most Wednesdays we will meet at 7:30 depending on weather and the work to be done at the time. If and when things change we will send out an email.

State Conference Organizational Meeting Scheduled

- Gary Slanga

To all Master Gardeners,

I would like to have a meeting of all the Chairpersons of the various committees on Wed. 4th Sep. at 10:00 AM. This is burger Wed. so food will be available after. It is important that all chairpersons and all who signed up for committees be present as we will discuss the responsibilities of each committee. If you are not signed up for a committee it is still important that you attend so that you can be informed of what is being planned for the conference.

Also, the State Conference representatives from the State Board of Directors will be here on Wed. Sep 25th at 10:30 after our Board of Directors meeting. This is also a very important meeting and I would encourage all who can attend, please plan on being there.

The Quesinberry Garden on TV

Mary Lew Quesinberry's garden will be on Central Texas Gardener on local stations as follows:

KLRU Saturday, September 28 at Noon and 4 pm

Sunday, September 29 at 9 am

Monday, September 30 at 5:30 am

KNCT (Killeen and Waco)

Saturday, September 28 at 1:30 pm

KLRN (San Antonio)

Saturday, September 28 at 11 am

KAMU (College Station)

Saturday, September 28 at 5 pm

KLRU Q Tuesday, October 1 at 6:30 pm

Wednesday, October 2 at 7 am

Friday, October 4 at 9:30 am

New Master Gardener Classes

If you know anyone interested in attending the next Bell County Master Gardener classes, please give them the following information:

Classes start January 8th, 2014

They meet 1-5 pm at County Extension Office

Cost: \$250.00

Class Orientation, November 20, 2013

Application may be obtained at the County Extension Office or by downloading from:

<http://txmg.org/bell/join-bcmga/application-certification/>

Announcements

Award Nominations Needed

- Bernie Hurta

We have a lot of hard-working Master Gardeners deserving of our awards. The awards are: Golden Trowel, Green Thumb, and Intern of the Year. The award time period for the Golden Trowel and Green Thumb awards is the Association Fiscal Year, June 1, 2012 to May 31, 2013.

The Intern of the Year Award is awarded to an intern from the last class, the 2013 New Class. The award's criteria and the award forms are on our website. **Deadline is October 31st**. If you need a printed form, let Bernie Hurta know.

Awards are presented at our Dec. 5th Christmas Party.

So, let's get those nomination forms filled-out. I'm sure everyone knows of a deserving Master Gardener!

Garden Club Needs Help

Killeen Garden Club is starting up a Jr. Garden Club at Clarke Elementary in Killeen. We are getting out programs ready for this school year and were wondering if you would be willing to come and do a couple of programs with us?

Here are the scheduled dates and topics:

3 October: Good Bugs/Bad Bugs in the Garden

7 November: Force of Nature/Trees and their roots

5 December: Different Soil Types for different plants

2 January: How Plants Clean Our Air

6 February: Life Cycle of the Earth/ Farmer's Almanac

6 March: Fertilizer in the garden/ natural and chemical

3 April: Eco System/ Terrarium

1 May: Plants for different Regions/ Mother's Day Plant

We are teaching the children in 4th and 5th grade how science is at work in the garden, reinforcing what is learned in the class room. The classes meet from 3:15 - 4:30 pm. Please contact Mary Ann Everett at everett.maryann4@gmail.com

Weed Column?

- Crystal Fisher

If a Master Gardener wants to take on a writing project of a few paragraphs a month, identifying weeds would be something most of us would read over very closely. Of course, there are some nice yards whose owner might not understand the word "weed." But for those of us who do, some are a bear to deal with regarding what it takes to identify and eradicate, while some are edible. All are worthy of mentioning.

Former Bell County Master Gardener, Harriet Jackson passed away on August 5th.

Our condolences to her family.

What's Happening in Your Yard?

- Frances Idoux



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[Calendar Banner of Vicks plant, Plectranthus tomentosus](#) by Terrie Hahn

[Smiley face on page 3 from susanschooldaze.blogspot](#)

Please submit articles for the Blooming Bell as Word Documents with photos separate as jpg files to Terrie Hahn at:

moompie45@hotmail.com

Please do not send PDF documents.

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