

~ Bluebonnet Master Gardeners ~

The Blooming News

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Letter from the Past President

Master Gardener Plant sale April 9, 2016 at the Liedertafel Hall in Sealy.

Plant sale is fast approaching. Work day to set up will be Friday, with the sale starting at 8:30 on Saturday. It will be behind the Hall under the covered structure. Renee has been working hard and visiting nurseries to find the best plants that will do well in our area. She has selected a variety of perennials, natives, drought tolerant, succulents, pollinators, roses, and shade and sun loving plants that usually aren't found in the box stores. There will also be a raffle for a scrolled garden arbor, a large bicycle with 3 planters and a Walmart gift card. Tickets for the raffle are one for \$5 or five for \$20. There will also be citrus. Satsumas, Natchez Thornless Blackberry, three different blueberries, and 3 different grapes. If you have any special

requests call Renee at 832-492-3293 or email at renee@ircsurplus.com.

If you have plants that you wish to donate to the sale, you may do so, there will be a section for MG grown plants. Make sure they are healthy, pest free, and look great.

Remember that you get volunteer hours for working those days. We also need people to stay for clean up when the sale ends. It takes a while to take things down as well as put them up.

Thanks to Kay Rekoﬀ, who wrote the next article on her favorite Orchid. Remember that you can get CEUs for research that you do on articles, as well as volunteer hours for writing them. (Usually one CEU)

Next meeting is our intern graduation and pot luck. It will be at Grace Community Church in Bellville. April 26, 8:30 board meeting, 10:00am social, 10:30 meeting.

See you soon!

Faye

In spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.

Margaret Atwood

Orchid



Phalaenopsis (fayl-eh-nop-sis)

By Kay Rekoff, Master Gardener

Phalaenopsis is known as the moth orchid because its flowers resemble flying moths. The plant is a monopodial (grows upward, making new elongated oval leaves atop one another) epiphyte (grows in nature in the tropics attached to the side of a tree for support). Multiple medium to large blooms grow from long notched spikes which last a month to half a year. The flowers come in white, pink, red, purple, yellow, and orange which can be solid, striped, or spotted. Peak bloom time is winter to spring.

Plants are easy to grow needing low light or an eastern window. They should never be exposed to direct sun light. Water once a week at the sink and let the water drain completely. Fertilize lightly once a month with an orchid fertilizer. If fertilizer salts accumulate, flush pot with plain water. The temperature range on warm days should be 65-85 degrees F. Winter temperature should be 60-65 degrees F. A temperature drop 10 degrees especially the fall will trigger new blooms.

The best pest control is insecticidal soap applied for pests which include little brown scales, green aphids, thrips, and white flies. Spray plants until dripping wet a few days apart. White mealy bugs can be controlled by applying alcohol on the bug with a Q-tip.

Repot your orchids every year or two using plastic pots (no clay). Use a medium orchid mix. To repot, presoak the new mix in warm water for one hour before use. Gently try not to disturb the roots. There are two types of roots: thick gray aerial roots emerging from the base that creep along the surface and absorbs water and whitish subsurface roots that anchor the plant which can be trimmed slightly if needed. Brownish dead roots need to be removed. Fill a plastic pot one-third full of new mix, center the plant in the middle and pack the mix firmly around the roots. The base should be one inch below the surface.

Source: Bloom-Again Orchids by Judy White, Timber Press, 2009



Easter Lily *Lilium longiflorum*

Ever wonder where those beautiful Easter Lilies come from? The Easter Lilly is native to the Ryukyu Islands of southern Japan. Prior to 1941, the majority of the Easter Lily bulbs were exported to the US from Japan. World War II eliminated the dependence on Japanese-produced bulbs and commercial bulb production shifted to the US. Current US production began with a World War I soldier, Louis Houghton, who brought a suitcase full of hybrid lily bulbs to the South coast of Oregon in 1919. He gave bulbs to his friends and neighbors. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Japanese source was cut off, and the value of the bulbs sky-rocketed. Many of the people who were growing bulbs decided to grow them commercially. By 1945, there were about 1200 growers producing bulbs up and down the Pacific coast. Today, over 95% of all bulbs grown for market are produced by just ten farms in a narrow coastal region along the California-Oregon border, from Smith River, Calif, to Brookings, Oregon.



The most widely grown cultivar is “Nellie White”, named by grower James White for his wife. In 1996, about 11.5 million Easter Lily bulbs were shipped to commercial greenhouses in the US and Canada with a wholesale value of around \$37 million. Growing Lily bulbs is an exact science and requires constant care since they do not go dormant. Each bulb is handled over 40 times before it is ready to be shipped.

.Legends abound over the reputation of the Lily. Ancient fables tell of the lily springing from the milk of Hera, the mythological Queen of Heaven. The lily has long been associated with the Virgin Mary. Legend has it that when the Virgin Mary’s tomb was visited three days after her burial, it was found empty save for bunches of majestic white lilies. They also played a significant presence in the paradise of Adam and Eve. Tradition has it that when Eve left the Garden of Eden, she shed real tears of repentance, and from her tears sprung up lilies. The spiritual principle here is that true repentance is the beginning of beauty. Today, the Easter Lily serves as a reminder that Easter is a time for rejoicing and celebration.

Source: Aggie Horticulture archives.

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That God once loved a garden
We learn in Holy writ.
And seeing gardens in the spring
I well can credit it.

Winifred Letts; 'Stephen's Green'

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