

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

October 2002

Vol. 2, Iss. 9

October Meeting Items of Interest:

Our speaker this month was not Kyle Kolenovsky as we thought. Actually, we had no speaker. Kyle had to cancel for an unexpected trip and would like for us to reschedule. Hopefully we'll have him speak next year.

Cindy Erndt thanked everyone who helped with the plant sale. Great job! She also said that although we had a lot of plants left, we sold out of many of the ones we had. Plants were available for sale from the greenhouse on Friday morning and Tuesday morning. Any healthy plants that were remaining after Tuesday were sold at cost to a garden club for their plant sale. Tommy Holt said that it looks like we made close to \$1,000 at the plant sale - which is the best we've ever done for a fall sale. Kudos to Cindy for her hard work in getting everything together. She has made our plant sales more organized and successful than they have ever been.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is having Family Day at the Brazoria Refuge (on Stratton Ridge Road) on November 16 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Master Gardeners and the Master Naturalists will have an information booth and volunteers are needed to work at it. If you are interested in helping, contact Ray Michalik. Kirby said that the 100th Anniversary of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in 2003 and this year's Family Day is the start of a year-long celebration.

Carol Farmer said that the number entries made at the county fair this year was dismal and suggested that in the future we make the booth an information booth only. Everyone seemed to be in agreement with this idea.

Kirby asked for volunteers to serve on a committee for the Texas Master Gardener Association competition which is held every year. The committee pinpoints a project/accomplishment of our organization and completes the necessary paperwork for entry into the competition. Donie Stowers, who has been a competition judge in the past, is serving in an advisory capacity. Tom Harris volunteered to serve on the committee. He needs two or three more people to assist him. If you are interested, contact Tom.

Thanks to Jan Foerster, Doreen Morgan and Barbara Burkhardt for bringing refreshments.

DON'T FORGET!!! Our November meeting is election time, potluck dinner time, and plant/seed swap time. Tommy Holt is bringing gumbo and suggested that everyone bring salads and desserts to accompany it. Also, don't forget to bring plants (one or two, please, not fifteen) and seeds to swap.

2002 Elections

The Nominating Committee is made up of Barbara Ray, Ted Cooper, Pat Cayer, Mary Lou Christie and Barbara Burkhardt. If you want to nominate someone for office, please contact one of the members of the Nominating Committee. They will take nominations up to election time at our November 12 meeting. So far, they have not received any names from anyone other than themselves. Here is their current list of nominations:

President:	John Alcorn
1st Vice President:	Don Gerard
2nd Vice President:	Sherry Summers; Donie Stowers
Secretary:	Judy Wood
Treasurer:	Tommy Holt
State Representatives:	Pam and David Peltier
Alternate Representatives:	Pat and Don Gerard

Demonstration Gardens:

Meeting on the Future of the Demonstration Gardens (9/27/02): There seemed to be a general consensus that we like the current location of the Demonstration Gardens. The greenhouse and building are too worthwhile for us to walk away from with only one attempt at negotiating an interagency agreement. There seemed to be no desire for making any additional improvements on the property until we have a signed agreement Paula, Rich Tillman and Gil Livanec will meet with Ken Pounder (director of the experiment station) on October 18 to discuss the interagency agreement and alternatives. In the meantime, we'll need to keep maintaining the beds we have at the Demonstration Gardens in the event we have to look elsewhere for property. It was pointed out that nobody will be interested in helping us with property if we have weed infested flowerbeds. It just wouldn't be impressive at all. The weeds at the Demonstration Gardens are many, and I pulled one that was taller and stronger than Severin, so I will also add that they are hearty! Please plan on going out on one of the workdays. The weather seems to be trying to cool off a bit, so maybe it will be a bit more bearable. Of course, even in the heat it's pleasant to be there with the new CEMAP bed and the great bench in it.

Greenhouse Lock: If you go out to work at the Demonstration Gardens at times other than the designated work days, please remember to lock the Greenhouse door.

Work Days - Tuesdays, Fridays, and 3rd Saturday.

mark your calendars for these	November 5	November 8	November 12	November 15
November work days:	November 16	November 19	November 22	November 26
	November 29			

<u>Mark Your Calendar:</u> <i>*see below for details</i> 2002 Dates: November 12: November meeting - elections, plant swap and potluck November 14: A Country Christmas November 18: Family Day - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service November 19: Brazoria County Pecan Show December 10: December meeting		2003 Dates: January 14: January Meeting - awards and recognitions January 28: Little League Turf and Pesticide Training, Alvin Community College February 11: Spring Master Gardener Classes begin April 5: Pecan Grafting Field Day at Varner Hogg April 19: Spring Plant Sale June 7, 14, 21, 28: Farmers Market September 9: Fall Master Gardener Classes begin September 20: Fall Plant Sale October 4-11: Brazoria County Fair November 18: Brazoria County Pecan Show	
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Miscellaneous Master Gardener Business:

Wagon: There was a Little Tykes wagon left at the plant sale with no name on it. If you are missing your wagon, you can pick it up in the building at the Demonstration Gardens.

Roster: Please check your information on the BCMGA roster. If any changes need to be made, contact Carol Farmer.

Extension Office Beds: We will be continuing to install flowerbeds at the Extension Office, so if you like to like to install new beds rather than keep them weeded, this may be the project for you. Arrangements have been made to have probationers to help with maintenance. Details will come later as to when things will happen, so watch for them. There was a work day on October 11. If you want to be notified of future workdays, contact Don Gerard.

Some 4-H moms and some home school moms witnessed Pat and Ted putting in the flowerbed around the sign and talked to Paula about BCMGA. Apparently they are very interested in getting their kids involved in working with the Master Gardeners. We may have some junior Master Gardeners on our hands in the near future.

Dates, Dates, Dates: If you know of any upcoming events that would be of interest to Master Gardeners, please let me know.

In The Garden:

Seed Catalogs: Nobody has given me any seed catalog information, and I forgot to give a reminder at the meeting. If you have a seed catalog you especially like, please give me the information, so I can compile a list for the newsletter. You can bring the catalog to the November meeting, and I'll get the information off of it.

A Gardening Place to Visit: Peckerwood Garden - 20571 FM 359, Hempstead, Texas (lies about 50 minutes from downtown Houston); 979-826-3232. Website: www.peckerwoodgarden.com.

History of Peckerwood Garden: Thirty years ago John G. Fairey came to Texas to teach first-year design in the School of Architecture at Texas A&M and in 1971 purchased the land that forms the nucleus of the Garden. The Garden is still evolving on a site that has grown to 19 acres.

The Peckerwood Garden is an outstanding repository of rare and unusual plants and unique folk art from Mexico and the United States. Its purpose is to encourage the people of these two neighboring countries to rebuild the common heritage that lies in their shared ecological and cultural experiences.

Group tours can be arranged any time of year. Individuals can visit the garden on select open days. Call or visit the website for these dates. No reservation is needed, however, a minimum \$5.00 donation is required for admittance. Small children, baby strollers and pets are not allowed due to the delicate and sharp plants. Seeds can be ordered online from Peckerwood Garden through the website.

Here's a Tip: Here is a simple recipe for a herbicide that supposedly works better than Roundup:

To 1 gallon of 20% vinegar add: 2 oz. Orange Oil
 Tsp. or so of dish soap

Mix in a sprayer and wet down any foliage you want to kill. Can be applied by hand with a paint brush in an area where you don't want to harm surrounding plants. The key is the 20% vinegar, which can usually be purchased at local nurseries as can the Orange Oil. This has no residual effect in the ground.

I haven't had a chance to try this. If anyone tries it, please let me know the results.

Submitted by: Donie Stowers

Give it a Grow: Featuring...Cat's Whiskers Cat's Whiskers are excellent for the home landscape as bees, butterflies and hummingbirds are attracted to the plant for its nectar. Cat's Whiskers is a member of the mint family and is known botanically as *Orthosiphon stamineus*. Its origin is tropical East Asia, but it grows well in the South. Its blossoms, which are tropical and exotic may be white or bluish-purple, and when the bloom opens, it has a long spike full of flowers and stamens, similar to a cat's whiskers. Cat's Whiskers is good for combination planting.

Full sun is recommended, but the plant will grow with several hours of filtered light combined with spotty direct sun. This shrub-type plant reaches about 2 feet in height and spreads 3 to 4 feet. It has a series of blooms as the plant gets more stems and blooms on new growth. It needs regular watering and monthly feedings with a complete and balanced fertilizer. It also can grow from seed and is easy to propagate by cuttings. Prepare the soil by incorporating 3 to 4 inches of organic matter and by working it into the soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. While tilling or turning, mix in a pound of slow-release 12-6-6 fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed space.

A note from my garden: I'm a vegetable person and am not good at growing flowering plants. I found my Cat's Whisker plant to be very hearty. I planted it right into the sticky gumbo without any bed preparation at all. It didn't get water every day - maybe every week - and the only fertilizer it got was runoff from our citrus trees. It even grew back from the light freezes we had last year. I'm sure it would have had greener leaves with some

fertilizer, but it bloomed profusely and was the pride of my front yard. The one thing it was unable to survive was a car tire dragging it out of the ground when someone drove up over our curb. I now have several that I took from cuttings of my lost plant, and they are doing very well.

In many cultures, the boiled leaves of Cat's Whiskers are regarded as a medicinal meal. Sap from the leaves is used as an analgesic, particularly for headaches and earaches and the leaves also have anti-inflammatory properties. A decoction or infusion of boiled leaves and/or roots is administered to facilitate childbirth, treat stomach-ache, constipation, conjunctivitis or thread-worm infection. The whole plant is used to treat scorpion stings and snake bites. Java Tea, which is used to help pass kidney stones, is made from Cat's Whiskers and the plants also have insecticidal and repellent characteristics.

Plant Facts:

Common Name: **Cat's Whiskers**

Botanical Name: ***Orthosiphon stamineus***

Family: **Labiatae (mint family)**

Plant Type: **Moderately bushy mint-like herb**

Origin: **Tropical East Asia**

Zones: **9 - 11, treated as a perennial**

Height: **to 2'**

Rate of Growth: **Medium**

Salt Tolerance: **None**

Soil Requirements: **Fertile, well-drained soil**

Water Requirements: **Requires heavy, regular watering, do not allow to dry out**

Nutritional Requirements: **Balanced liquid fertilizer monthly**

Light Requirements: **Full sun or filtered light combined with spotty direct sun**

Form: **Mint-like herb**

Leaves: **Mid-green to 2" long, narrowly ovate, toothed**

Flowers: **Lavender or white, mint-like flowers with unusually long stamens reminiscent of cat whiskers**

Fruits: **None of interest**

Pests or diseases: **None major**

Uses: **Specimen plant**

Bad Habits: **None**

Cost: **\$\$ -- reasonable**

Propagation: **Seeds and root easily from stem cuttings**

Sources:

www.matagorda-bay.com/homelife/hummer.html

www.aces.edu/dept/extcomm/newspaper/may17a01.html

www.floridagardener.com/pom/orthosiphon.htm

Lacey Oak Designated as a Texas Superstar:

DALLAS -- After more than 7 years of state-wide testing, the Texas A&M University Agriculture Program has designated the lacey oak tree as the newest Texas Superstar. "Lacey oak is a beautiful small to medium-size deciduous tree with a minor identity problem, being known alternately as *Quercus laceyi* or *Quercus glaucoides*," said Dr. Mike Arnold, associate professor of landscape horticulture at Texas A&M University. "Most folks simply call it lacey oak, but other common names it has worn over time include blue oak, canyon oak, encino robie, mountain oak, smoky oak and rock oak." Most of these refer to the tough growing conditions in central and south Texas where this species resides, Arnold said, or are related to its handsome blue-green foliage. Regardless of the name, this plant has much to offer as a landscape plant in its native Texas, he said. "Leaves expand as a soft pink color, turning a handsome blue-green as they mature, lending the plant an intriguing smoky air. The foliage is seldom bothered by insects or disease. Fall color varies from brown to yellow." Growth habit varies according to local environment, with the most common size being 30-35 feet in height and spread, he added. Lacey oaks display a picturesque irregularly rounded crown atop a stoutish trunk. These attributes, along with a textured gray bark, make this tree "a handsome addition to Texas landscapes, resembling a miniature white oak, but of tougher constitution," Arnold said. Once established, lacey oak is also highly tolerant of heat, drought and high pH soils. Full sun to light afternoon shade with morning sun are the best exposures. Lacey oak will survive on well-drained clay soils, but it grows best on well-drained limestone soils. "Although lacey oak can be grown in East Texas, it is best adapted to the Hill Country and cultivated settings in West Texas," Arnold said. "Cold tolerance has not been fully documented for lacey oak, but based on regional plantings, it should be suitable for use in USDA zones 7

(perhaps protected spots in 6b) through 9." But even superstars have limits. Research has shown limitations for lacey oak include an intolerance to poorly drained soils, a moderate growth rate and a tendency to need some initial minor pruning. Growth and landscape appeal in high rainfall areas will be enhanced if the trees are planted on raised beds or berms. Arnold noted that landscape utilization of lacey oak might include placement as a specimen plant, small to medium-size lawn or shade tree, or as a shade tree for a patio. Lacy oaks work well in native Texas landscapes and naturalized plantings where the acorns can serve as a wildlife attractant, and in Xeriscapes or low water use landscapes, he said. "For a bit of the unusual, try growing lacey oak as a specimen in large containers to accent courtyards or entryways to large buildings," Arnold said. "The picturesque growth habit of this species would be accentuated if it were used as a bonsai plant. "Lacey oak deserves frequent consideration when discussing smaller shade trees that will stay in scale with residential landscapes. This beautiful tree will add a touch of the Texas hill country to your urban landscape." The Texas Superstar effort is a horticultural research and Extension program of Texas A&M. "This cooperative program combines the expertise of university and industry leaders in the identification of superior landscape plants for Texas, and their subsequent introduction in the marketplace," said Steve George, Extension horticulturist at Texas A&M Dallas and leader of the Texas Superstar Program. To identify such plants, the Agriculture Program at Texas A&M conducts extensive horticultural field trials, during which the plants are never sprayed with any pesticide. For more information on lacey oak or to find the nearest official Texas Superstar retailer, go to www.TexasSuperstar.com.

Source: Jennifer Paul, Extension Communications Specialist, Oct. 18, 2002

Happy Gardening!!!

Newsletter Editor: Anna Gawlik



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