

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

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At the Meeting:

Speaker - Our speaker this month was Mark Walton, husband of Kathy Walton, who gave a great presentation on plant breeding and genetics.

MG Training Fee - After comparing what other counties request, it has been decided to charge \$125 for the MG Training classes, starting with the Spring 2005 class.

Insurance Coverage - Beginning next year, our annual dues will be \$13 rather than \$12. The increase of \$1 will provide insurance to cover each member at any BCMGA function or any program at which you are presenting as a Master Gardener. For an information sheet on what is covered and by how much, contact John Alcorn. Please note that you must be a dues paying member in order to be covered. The coverage will not begin until the beginning of 2005.

Opportunity Grant - Previously referred to as a "scholarship" for BCMG's, the Guidelines and Application Form have been finalized. Soon you will be able to print them from the website, however, in the meantime, you can get a copy from Paula if you are interested.

The Opportunity Grant Committee consists of: Barbara Brown, Ted Jagen, Patty Varnado and Donie Stowers.

Fruit Study Group - We are putting together a fruit study group. The group will meet monthly or bi-monthly to share information, plants, problems, etc. We may meet at the Extension Office or at a group member's home. We'll have speakers for seminars and workshops. The group will also plan and execute at least one annual educational event and plant sale.

If you would like to join the group, please let Paula know your time preferences (in order of preference) for weekday mornings, afternoons and evenings. If there is a day of the week you cannot attend, please indicate this as well. She will do her best to accommodate as many members as possible.

Brazosport College Classes - We're still looking for an instructor for the perennial class at Brazosport. If you would like to teach a class but you don't have anything prepared, Don Gerard has a CD from A&M with PowerPoint presentations on *Texas Superstars* (plus a handout for the students to "follow along") and *Best Ornamentals for the Gulf Coast*, which is actually a presentation on trees, shrubs and vines for this area. There is also one on *Waterwise Landscaping*, which isn't exactly perennials, but would fit in if time permits. If you are able to teach the class, please contact Don asap. It will be a 3 hour class on Wednesday, September 15.

Also, Marti still needs help covering the first hour of her class. Contact Don if you can help her out.

Fall Plant Sale - Do you know why our plant sales have become so great? We have 4 co-chairs: Barbara Brown, Carol Farmer, Evelyn Moon and Donie Stowers (listed in alphabetical order). What a great group to have working together to make something happen. Thanks to all of them for all of their hard work.

Now for the plans for the Fall Plant Sale: As of the meeting, the first round of press releases had gone out and articles had already been run announcing the sale. More rounds will be going out. Kathy has also requested feature articles be written. At the meeting, flyers were available for people to hand out. (Please note that you can also print the flyer from the website.) At the next meeting, signs will be available for everyone to post on the roadside before the sale (and retrieve after the sale for reuse next spring).

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? We need people to come out and help water the plants that we have. It is too hot to ignore them. If you are able to come out one day a week, either in the morning or around 5:00, please contact Barbara Brown or Barbara Ross. They need to keep track of when the watering is happening, so please talk to them rather than just show up.

DO WE NEED PLANTS? Yes, but please do not bring any more cuttings. If you have plants that you can divide, you can bring them to the greenhouse, and they will be potted. We don't have as many self-propagated plants, but we did get some good deals on plants at local nurseries.

WHEN WILL WE FIND OUT MORE? Come to the September meeting to get signage and find out more about how to help out with the sale. There will be no speaker in September, due to in depth coverage of sale information.

Nominating Committee - Kirby Rapstein and Greg Marsh are on the Nominating Committee for 2004. One more person is needed to fill spot #3. If you are interested, contact Don Gerard.

JMG's - The Groovy Gardeners will reconvene their class on September 17 at the DG around 9:00 a.m. All interested in helping out with them are welcome to join. They will start with weeding their flowerbed.

There will also be a meeting of JMG's at the Northway Baptist Church on October 25 at 3:00 p.m. Again, anyone interested should show up. Contact Paula if you need further information.

(NOTE: Please remember if you work with the JMG's you need to have a background check. Contact Paula for more information on this.)

News to Know:

Condolences - Our thoughts and prayers are with Mary Lou Christie who lost her husband, Jim, on August 24. Jim was a well-loved member of BCMGA, and we will all miss him.

Our sympathy is also extended to Lee Withers lost her grandmother on August 24. Our thoughts and prayers are also with her.

Master Gardener Hotline - We still need people to sign up to answer the hotline. There are just a couple of heavy duty months left, so please call Sandra at the Extension Office to sign up.

Volunteer Hours - Don Gerard has a lot of blank spaces in his spreadsheet when it comes to hours. Please turn in your time to him. You can mail it, bring it to the meeting or bring it to the MG office. Don't wait until the end of the year. He won't have time to input everything if you do!

Program Planning for 2005 - As many of you are aware, Ann McLain (Class of 2005) has accepted the role of Program Planning Coordinator for our 2005 educational programs. Ann will head the committee and lend her leadership to the selection and scheduling of topics and speakers for advanced training and public educational programs. In the coming year, we would like to add some advanced training opportunities (and add an incentive for participation at the education gardens), by inviting speakers to the demonstration gardens one Tuesday a month to give a talk and demonstration as a lunchtime reward. There are numerous hands-on opportunities including composting, grafting, soil preparation, tree planting, rose care, etc.

Committee Selection: If you would like to serve on the committee, please contact Paula or Ann.

Your Input: If you have a favorite topic or speaker, someone you've heard about but never seen, or a workshop you would definitely attend, please let us know as soon as possible.

At the Demonstration Gardens:

A Shady Topic - As of the meeting, the shade house needed about three more workdays until completion, so I'm sure it's finished by now. Go out and check it out.

And Now For Some Dirt - Several loads of soil were delivered to the DG. (My son, Severin, and I happened to be there to watch one load get dumped. There were two people with really big smiles on their faces: Severin because of the dump truck and Barbara Ross because of the soil!) Thanks to Jesse for bringing out his tractor and spreading all that dirt around!

New Beds - Lee Withers is in charge of the new herb bed, and Barbara Ross is in charge of the new tropicals bed. They both welcome help. If you are interested in helping, just show up at the DG on one of the work days.

Work Days - Tuesdays and Fridays from 7:30/8:00 a.m. until noon.

**Mark your calendars for these
September work days:**

September 3	September 7	September 10
September 14	September 17*	September 21
September 24	September 28	

*Third Friday

Calendar of Events:

**see below for details*

new items in bold

2004 Dates:

Sept 8: Master Naturalist Classes begin*
 Sept 8: Permaculture & Land Design begins
Sept 9: Rain Gardens*
Sept 10: Nature's Pharmacy*
Sept 10: Costa Rican Flora and Fauna*
Sept 11: Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza*
Sept 11: Wildscapes Workshop and Plant Sale*
Sept 11: EarthKind Roses*
Sept 11-12: Houston Bromeliad Society Show and Sale*
 Sept 13: Vegetable Gardens at Their Best
 Sept 14: September Meeting
 Sept 15: Perennial Plants and Flowers
 Sept 17: Third Friday
 Sept 18: Fall Plant Sale
Sept 18: Dallas Blooms Autumn*
Sept 18: Orchid Propagation*
 Sept 20: Landscaping with Native Plants
Sept 20: Weeds, Weather and Other Garden Woes*
 Sept. 20-22: Landscape Design Study Course III
 Sept 22: The Mysterious Hibiscus & Plumeria
Sept 25: It's Thyme, Etc., for Fall*
Sept 26: Butterflies and Hummingbirds*
 Sept 27: The Wonders of Herbs
 Sept 29: Tropicals
Sept 29- Oct 1: EarthKind Specialist Training*
Oct 2: Naturalizing Fall Bulbs for the South*
Oct 2: Buchanan's Annual Fall Festival*
Oct 2-3: Peckerwood Gardens Open Days*
 Oct 4: Water, Pond & Bog Gardening
 Oct 6: Propagation

Oct 8: Garden Workday: Daylilies*
 Oct 11: Critters & Plants
 Oct 12: October Meeting
 Oct 13: Roses Are Red ... and Wonderful!
 Oct 16: HerbFest
 Oct 18: Soil & Soil Additives
 Oct 20: Turf
 Oct 22: Third Friday
 Oct 25: To Bee or Not to Bee?
 Oct 27: Insect Management
 Nov 1: Landscape Design
 Nov 3: Citrus and Fruit Trees
 Nov 9: November Meeting
 Nov 19: Third Friday
 Dec 14: December Meeting
 Dec 17: Third Friday

2005 Dates:

Jan 11: January Meeting
 Feb 8: February Meeting
 Mar 8: March Meeting
 Apr 12: April Meeting
April 20: Spring Plant Sale
 May 5: State MG Conference
 May 10: May Meeting
 June 14: June Meeting
 July 12: July Meeting
 Aug 9: August Meeting
 Sept 13: September Meeting
 Oct 11: October Meeting
 Nov 8: November Meeting
 Dec 13: December Meeting

Master Naturalist Training - Begins: September 8; Time: 8:30 a.m.; Location: Texas Cooperative Extension Office, 21017 CR 171, Angleton TX 77515 979-864-1558, 979-388-1558 or 281-756-1558 ext. 112. The Cradle of

Texas Master Naturalist Chapter classes will continue for 11 consecutive weeks. There will be lectures in the morning, followed by field trips in the afternoon. The fee is \$100.00. Anyone interested should contact Sandra for a registration form. You can also e-mail or call Barbara Burkhardt for information. (Note from Barbara: I have found these classes to be a great supplement to my Master Gardener training.)

Rain Gardens - Date: September 9; Time: 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.; Location: City of Bellaire, Recreation Center, 5125 Laurel, Bellaire; Phone: 713-662-8280. Instructor: J. Kolenovsky. Learn what a rain garden is, how to construct one, what they do, and what plants can be planted in one. Find out how you can design one for your yard that is a representation of yourself. Learn how to build a simple one or a complex one. They can be quite inexpensive or as fancy as one likes. Learn how they offset subsidence and foundation shifting. Minimum 3 participants. Fee: Res. \$20, Non-Res. \$30.

Nature's Pharmacy: Exploration of the World's Rain Forests, Coral Reefs and Extreme Environments for New Medicines - Date: September 10; Time: Programs begin at 7:00 pm, Speaker Reception at 6:30 pm in the Visitor's Gallery. Location: Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin; Phone: 512-292-4100. Speaker: Gordon M. Cragg, Ph.D., Chief of the Natural Products Branch, National Cancer Institute. Throughout history, humans have depended on plants for their very existence. Yet many people today rarely give thought to the source of the products that help us sustain life. Even with unprecedented advancement of pharmaceuticals, scientists are realizing that it is critical to better understand the source of the many healing compounds - that is, plants. Over the millennia, tropical peoples have learned to use a variety of plants for maintaining health and treating disease. An estimated 80 percent of the world's medicinal plants are found in tropical areas, and we have much to learn about the traditional uses of these plants from the people who use them. Presented free-of-charge, open to the general public, and co-hosted by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the Botanical Research Institute of Texas.

Costa Rican Flora and Fauna - Date: September 10; Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Bring a sack lunch and join Nancy Greig from the Cockrell Butterfly Center as she shows slides of her treks through Costa Rica. See the beautiful plants and animals of this tropical paradise.

EarthKind Roses - Date: September 11; Time: 9:30 a.m.; Location: Ellison's Greenhouses, 2107 East Sonte St., Brenham, TX; Phone: 979-277-6212. Seminars, beginning at 10:00 a.m., will be given by the following: Dr. Steve George, Extension Center, Dallas; Mark Chamblee, Chamblee's Roses, Tyler; Gaye Hammond, VP Houston Rose Society; and Mike Shoup, Jr, Antique Rose Emporium. Dr. George will conduct a program exclusively for Master Gardeners in the afternoon with in-depth information, discussion of new cultivars, future plans for the EarthKind program and roles for Master Gardeners in EarthKind result demonstrations and educational programs for the public.

Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza - Date: September 11; Time: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.; Location: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in Lake Jackson. For more information, call 979-480-0999. See hundreds of migrating hummingbirds stocking up on flower nectar or at feeders as they prepare for their southbound journey to the tropics. Speakers will be on hand to talk about hummingbird biology and gardening and a hummingbird banding demonstration. Cost: \$3.

Wildscapes Workshop and Plant Sale-Landscaping with Native Plants to Attract Wildlife - Date: September 11; Time: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.; Plant Sale begins at 11:00 a.m.; Location: University of Houston - Central Campus. For more information, call Glenn Olsen, at 713-345-4151 or see website (<http://www.npsot.org/Houston/default.htm>) for flyer and registration form.. Sponsored by the Native Plant Society of Texas. Event will include a book sale, plant sale, exhibits, lectures, and door prizes. Registration deadline: September 6. Cost: \$30 per person.

Houston Bromeliad Society Show and Sale - Date: September 11-12; Time: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Location: Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, 4501 Woodway, Houston; Phone: 713-681-8433. Members of the Houston Bromeliad Society will be on hand to consult on general care of bromeliad plants. A portion of the proceeds from the sale benefits the Nature Center's educational programs. Sunday at 2 p.m., Houston Bromeliad Society members will discuss general care of bromeliad plants.

Dallas Blooms Autumn - Date: Begins September 18 and continues for six weeks; Location: Dallas Arboretum; 8617 Garland Rd., Dallas; Phone: 214-515-6500; Features more than 30,000 chrysanthemums and

thousands more fall-blooming annuals and perennials in a six-week, seven-weekend celebration featuring Dave Rogers' Big Bugs exhibit.

Orchid Propagation - Date: September 18; Time: 11:00 a.m.; Location: Martha's Bloomers, 8101 Highway 6 Navasota; Phone: 936-870-4111. Presented by Dr. Rainer Fink.

Weeds, Weather and Other Garden Woes - Date: September 20; Time: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Join Greg Harmison as he discusses quips, quotes and thoughts on gardening. This program mixes humor with practical advice to provide a fun look at gardening attitudes and how they apply to gardening practice.

It's Thyme, Etc., for Fall - Date: September 25; Time: 11:00 a.m.; Location: Martha's Bloomers, 8101 Highway 6 Navasota; Phone: 936-870-4111. Presented by Ann Wheeler, Log House Herb Farm.

Urban Nature Series - "Butterflies and Hummingbirds" - Date: September 26; Time: 2:00 p.m.; Location: Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, 4501 Woodway, Houston; Phone: 713-681-8433. J. Kolenovsky of the Native Plant Society of Texas is an avid and experienced wildlife habitat gardener. He will share the information about the natural history of butterflies and hummingbirds and the native plants upon which they depend. Gardeners and nature lovers will learn how to attract and enjoy these delightful winged creatures.

EarthKind Specialist Training - Date: September 29-October 1; Location: Center for Energy & Economic Development, Midland/Odessa. Training will include high quality training combined with hands-on experience on environmental site selection, soil preparation, cultivar selection, planting & maintenance, and pest control plus new environmental attitudes. The Master Gardener Specialist-EarthKind™ program is designed to provide advance training and resource to Master Gardeners and certify them to be part of a state corps of EarthKind™ experts and educators. To become a certified Master Gardener Specialist - EarthKind™, Master Gardeners are required to attend the Master Gardener Specialist - EarthKind™ training to fulfill training requirements and subsequently meet service requirements. Registration fee: \$200.00 (Includes 2 lunches, 2 dinners, snacks, drinks, personalized chambray shirt, 2 experimental roses, copy of "The Guide to Old Roses", set of Power Point programs and resource materials distributed during the course. For additional information, contact Paula.

Naturalizing Fall Bulbs for the South - Date: October 2; Time: 11:00 a.m.; Location: Martha's Bloomers, 8101 Highway 6 Navasota; Phone: 936-870-4111. Presented by Margaret Cherry.

Buchanan's Annual Fall Festival - Date: October 2; Location: Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 E. 11th, Houston; Phone: 713-861-5702. Food, music, drawing for \$250 shopping spree and workshops, including:
9:30am - Ruth Milburn, Houston Arboretum, "Wildflower Gardening"
11:00am - Mark Bowen, Author, "Naturalistic Landscaping"
1:00pm - Becky Lane, Buchanan's Staff, "Decorating for the Holidays"
3:00pm - Brenda Pennington, Urban Gardeners, "Attracting Wildlife to the Garden"

Peckerwood Gardens Open Days - Date: October 2-3; Time: 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.; Location: Peckerwood Gardens, 20571 F.M. 359, Hempstead; Phone: 979-826-3232.

Garden Workday: Daylilies - Date: October 4; Time: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Join us in the gardens for a workday in the daylily gardens. Help us dig, divide, pot and replant our daylily collection and learn about caring for these beautiful plants. Wear garden work clothes, you will get dirty.

News and Notes from the Coordinator:

from Paula Craig, CEA

- ✿ It's September and the fall plant sale is just ahead. The crew out at the greenhouse is doing a great job of getting things ready. Please mark your calendars for the regular greenhouse workdays on Tuesday and Fridays from 8:00 on. Your help is needed to make the sale a success. If you haven't been out this way in awhile, you need to see the new shade house, tropical beds and herb bed.
- ✿ MOWERS NEEDED!!! to get the grass down in front of the greenhouse grounds before the plant sale. Contact Barbara Ross or Ray Michalik for more information.

- ✿ Be sure to check out the extension office landscaping on your next visit. Lisa Darby did a wonderful job of designing. Thanks to everyone who braved the heat and the sudden downpour to help her install the plant materials.
- ✿ Thanks to DiAnna Munson, Suzanne Jerabeck and Lee Withers for their contributions to What's Growin' On. If you have an article you would like to share, please check with Anna on deadlines.
- ✿ The citrus/fruit study group will have its first meeting on September 21, 10:30 am at the extension office. We will select a chairperson, decide on meeting times, topics and other organizational items. Be thinking of a name for the group so that you are not heretofore known as The Fruits.
- ✿ The Herb Fest has lost two of its speakers and is in need of more volunteers if it is to go forward. If you would like to see the fest get off the ground, please attend a task force meeting at the extension office on Friday, September 10th at 11 am.
- ✿ From the Speakers Bureau: John Alcorn and Henry Willis will entertain the Lake Jackson Garden Club on Sept. 7th with a talk on vegetable gardening. Gil Livanec will speak on ginger and other tropicals at Alvin Community College on October 5th. Rob Brown will be conducting an informal Q&A session on lawn care at Country Place in Pearland in September, time TBA, and there is a whole line-up of volunteers gearing up for the Brazosport College adult education garden series. Thanks y'all! Anyone who has an area of expertise and would like to share, please contact Paula.

We are all very saddened by the recent loss of a longtime member and friend, Jim Christie. Jim will be remembered for his kind, gentle nature and giving spirit. Our prayers are with Mary Lou—God Speed.

On the Herbal Side:

from DiAnna Munson

Have a question about an herb? Do you know where to find facts based on scientific research? When I have a question I ask Herb Research Foundation. They have been the premier herb research and education organization for the past 20 years here in the U.S. They have worked with other nations throughout the world to improve plant conservation and maintain a sustainable herb crop, all designed to protect plants while boosting rural economies and preserving traditional medicine systems.

Their mission is to promote education about the safe use of medicinal herbs and to dispel common misconceptions about herb safety.

Their award-winning website is – www.herbs.org. It is constantly updated to bring you the most reliable herb information on the Internet. The other way they publish information is through Herb Information Packets. There are more than 200 different herbs available in packet form. Each packet contains at least 30 pages of carefully selected articles, studies, and/or discussions by experts, continually updated to reflect current research.

Check them out and if you are as impressed as I am with their service, think about supporting them through their membership program. The information on herbs is available with or without a membership. They are only funded by membership contributions.

Reflections from the Garden Goddess:

from Lee Withers

I was thinking on a late Sunday morning and a VERY PROFOUND THOUGHT hit me (I put it in capitals so you would understand how important this was to me). Life is like Compost. Now that part doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand, (you know when you add sweeter ingredients you get better results - that kind of stuff), but the lessons we learn from compost can actually be very complex. Who would have thought a small compost pile behind a tiny garage would cement lasting memories?

I love to compost. I feel I am getting something wonderful for nothing. I can't help but compost because I know I came from a long tradition of people who compost. My mom and dad compost, (Daddy mostly – he has one

of those fancy high tech tumblers and Momma just tells him where to put it) but the first instance I remember about acquiring any knowledge about composting came from my grandma. My Grandma Marcile, (only one I - forever I made her mad misspelling her name - my other grandma was named Lucille) Marcile Elizabeth Wilkinson Corley Groom (as she signs things now, she wants everyone to get the full recognition), was the first person in my memory to compost.

Her compost pile was a small homemade bin behind the garage made up of some hardware wire placed between the property line fence and the back wall of the garage. It was in No Man's Land - most specifically No Kid's Land. If we (my cousins and siblings) were caught back there, we would get in such horrific trouble, the kind that only a grandma can administer. We would get such a severe tongue lashing that my ears still try to tuck in the back of my head at the memory of them. Guess you know who was on the receiving end of many of those. I thought there was such a mystery to the secretiveness of her special compost (I didn't really know the purpose at the time) that it made it more inviting to sneak back there and play, which I guess is why the memory of all the tongue lashings.

In reality, I think she mentioned many years later, how she feared for our safety because snakes were back there hunting any rats or mice, but that never occurred to a rag tag bunch of 5 kids, ages 3 to 8 years old. We are conquering the world in her little back yard and behind the garage was a special place to hide until Grandma caught you, or you got tattled on.

I later also realized why that little pile of compost was so precious to her. You see we lived in Corpus Christi and the soil, as it does here, needs all the special help it can get. The winds along the coastline blow away anything not attached and the blowing sand made it worse. She would carefully gather any fallen leaves and vegetable scraps from the kitchen and gently turn it into her compost. The memories of her garden are special to me. She had a potting shed where, along with planting materials and chemicals, she had various broken cooking pots and dishes for us to play house. I still grow shrimp plants because she had them. They had beautiful red blooms, and we (or I should say me because it was my brilliant idea) mischievously pulled off the blooms for the "tomatoes" in our "salads" when we were making our own highly creative version of "mud pies" and playing house. You can imagine the tongue lashing I got from that great idea.

I am still looking for the giant pothos ivy that grew up the huge swing tree (this is not a species of tree just a memory name) in the back yard. The ivy was bright green with yellow variegations in the leaves which many were larger than a big man's hand. Sometime later as I began to start my teen years my Granddad Glenn died and after a period of time she remarried to a truly remarkable, uniquely talented, wonderful man, Poppa John. He was the original "White Trash Gardner" as he would have been called today. I just thought he was the cleverest man in the world with the ability to scrounge pontoon tanks for raised beds among other unusual objects. He cut them lengthwise and then Grandma filled them with succulents such as hens and chicks, aloe vera, and anything else she could get to grow. Hanging baskets were made from old hard hats and they had the first hanging basket tree. Everywhere she gardened, whether in her flower beds, pontoon boat halves, or hard hat hanging baskets, she always spread a little compost with the dirt. I can still see in my mind's eye the home-made screen she used to perfect her mixture almost massaging it across the screen.

Grandma Marcile was not a trained Master Gardener, or some horticulture guru, but she was one of the wisest people I have ever met. She spread her "compost" to all of us grandchildren and cousins she helped raise and guide. She used her "homemade screen" to protect us from many of the harsh realities of life until we were older. Many lessons were learned in that backyard, the compost pile, and while playing and growing up under her watchful eyes.

You see compost with the right mixture of ingredients and when well tended can be very rich and sweet smelling as in a full, balanced life. It amends many ills in the soils in which it is added. It adds many nutrients to plants to help them grow stronger and more resistant to problems. In this case Grandma Marcile's compost has aided 1 son and daughter-in-law, a stepson and stepdaughter and their spouses, 6 grandchildren, 7 great grandchildren, at least 7 nephews and nieces and their children and grandchildren, an army of friends and neighbors, her own brothers and sister and their children, and will continue as we take her type of compost throughout our lives and spread it on. You see compost never stops giving. Compost happens and when you do it right the results are never ending. Thank you, Grandma, for teaching me the right way to compost.

Happy gardening - May all your flowers bloom and your vegetables produce.

Give it a Grow - Go Wild Growing Wildflowers:

from Suzanne Jerabeck

Wildflowers! September is the time to plant them for a low-maintenance, picture-perfect bed (or field) next spring.

Years ago, my family and I visited Wildseed Farms when their visitor center was in Eagle Lake (now in Fredericksburg). That spring, the fields were amass with every color wildflower you can imagine. The sight was awesome – and well worth the visit. But the owner wasn't very supportive when I asked about growing wildflowers in Brazoria County's gumbo soil.

That's when I decided to try growing a field of my own. Choosing what to grow was simple, actually. I just took notice of all the wildflowers that grew naturally on the sides of the roadways. Since I wanted a mass of color, I chose the bright and cheery yellow clasping-leaved coneflower (*Dracopis amplexicaulis*).

When the wildflowers stopped blooming that year, I picked a few of the seed heads and dried them. Just before fall, I scattered them in a 10x10 area that gets full sun. No mess, no fuss. And in less than five years, that small patch of "borrowed" seeds from the side of the road has grown into an acre thick with solid yellow blooms from mid to late spring.

But watch out. These plants perform exactly as I wanted them to. They form extensive colonies which often shade out all other vegetation. The species name is from the Latin words amplexus, meaning "encircling" or "embracing" and caulis for "stem" referring to the plant's distinctive long, alternate, stalkless and clasping stem at the base of the leaf blade.

Experts will tell you that you need to prepare the soil, removing weeds and raking the soil to loosen it about an inch down. Then moisten the soil, broadcast the seeds evenly, and press the seed into the soil with your hands or feet to make sure there is seed-soil contact.

For successful seed germination, keep the soil moist. Reduce watering when seedlings are about two inches tall.

These small, new plants will go dormant during winter and bloom vigorously in the spring. Seeds that don't germinate in fall will sprout when the soil warms in spring.

Another growing tip: don't fertilize. By adding extra nutrients, you run the risk of having beautiful, thick foliage, and few flowers. After all, your wildflowers need to bloom and produce seed.

So, think back. What wildflowers on our Brazoria County roads grabbed your attention this past spring? What color were they? If you didn't collect seeds this past summer, don't worry. To find out the name of the plant, refer to one of the many Texas wildflower picture books in bookstores everywhere. Chances are those seeds are available now from your local nursery, a Texas seed seller, or online through Wildseed or any other reputable wildflower seed distributor.

Humor Section - Seriously!

The Science Experiment

from Donie Stowers

Little Johnny watched the science teacher start the experiment with the worms. Four worms were placed into four separate jars.

The first worm was put into a jar of alcohol.
The second worm was put into a jar of cigarette smoke.
The third worm was put into a jar of sperm.
The fourth worm was put into a jar of soil.

After one day, these were the results:

The first worm in alcohol - dead.

The second worm in cigarette smoke - dead.

The third worm in sperm - dead.

The fourth worm in soil - alive.

So the Science teacher asked the class - "What can you learn from this experiment?"

Little Johnny quickly raised his hand and said, "As long as you drink, smoke and have sex, you won't have worms!

Cops Make Major Hibiscus Bust

Wednesday, August 04, 2004

Texas cops thought they'd made a major drug bust when they raided a home northwest of Houston last Tuesday. After all, it looked like there were huge marijuana plants growing in the front yard.

"All of a sudden, they burst in with their guns loaded, pointing at me, screaming, 'Get on the floor! Get on the floor!'" northwest Harris County resident Blair Davis told KHOU-TV.

It turns out the tall plants with the narrow leaves arranged in a fan pattern weren't pot plants at all, but specimens of Texas Star hibiscus (search), which Davis grows for his landscaping business.

That didn't convince the 10 or so members of the Harris County Organized Crime Unit (search) who stormed around the house.

"I just put my head down, shook it and said: 'Guys, you are making a terrible mistake. That is Texas Star hibiscus, not marijuana,'" Davis told the TV station. "They just told me to shut up."

At one point, the officers discussed whether the bamboo in the window might be the demon weed as well, Davis told the Houston Chronicle. They also asked him what he planned to do with the watermelons and cantaloupes growing out back.

"What would I do with them?" Davis said he responded.

It turned out a concerned citizen had seen the native Texas plant, which has little white flowers and smooth green leaves - marijuana has rough leaves and dense flowering buds - in the yard and tipped off the authorities.

"My guys went out there, and they looked at the plants and stuff, and they believed them to be marijuana," Lt. Dan Webb told KHOU-TV.

After about an hour, the officers decided the search was over. They gave Davis a "citizen's information card" with the words "closed-report" written on it.

"No apology, no nothing," Davis complained to the Chronicle. "I realize they have a job to do, but this seems a little bizarre."

Lt. Webb defends his officers.

"I'm sure it was traumatic," he told KHOU. "Any time there's a search warrant served at your house, there's gonna be some trauma involved."

Davis thinks the narcotics officers might need a little more training.

"If they don't know what a marijuana plant looks like, maybe they should bring a picture with them," he told the TV station, "before they invade a citizen's home."

Source: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,127953,00.html>

Date: September 1, 2004

Garden Checklist - September:

- ✿ Coleus and caladiums require plenty of water this time of year if they are to remain lush and attractive until fall. Fertilize with ammonium sulfate at the rate of 1/3 to 1/2 pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.
- ✿ Rejuvenate heat-stressed geraniums and begonias for the fall season by lightly pruning, fertilizing and watering.
- ✿ Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture. Hollies will frequently drop their fruit under drought conditions. Some vegetables such as cucumbers or eggplants also become bitter if underwatered during peak growing times.

- ✿ Remove weak, unproductive growth and old seed heads from crape myrtles and roses to stimulate new growth for fall beauty.
- ✿ Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning until mid-winter. Pruning now may stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- ✿ Sow seeds of snapdragons, pinks, pansies and other winter flowers in flats for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- ✿ Prepare the beds for spring-flowering bulbs as soon as possible. It's important to cultivate the soil and add generous amounts of organic matter to improve water drainage. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage.
- ✿ Continue a disease spray schedule on roses as blackspot and mildew can be extremely damaging in September and October.
- ✿ Christmas cactus can be made to flower by supplying 12 hours of uninterrupted darkness and cool nights (55 degrees F) for a month starting in mid-October. Keep plants on the dry side for a month prior to the treatment.
- ✿ Plan to plant wildflowers in early September and October. Check supplies now and order seed for planting in open sunny areas. Consider bluebonnet, Indian paintbrush, coneflower, fire-wheel, black-eyed Sysan, evening primrose and many others. Soils should be lightly cultivated prior to planting.
- ✿ Divide spring flowering perennials such as iris, Shasta daisy, gaillardia, rudbeckias, cannas, daylilies, violets, liriopse and ajuga.

Source: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/sep03/husept03cklst.html>
 Date: August 31, 2004

Happy Birthday!

Happy September Birthday Wishes...

Ray Michalik - Sept. 4

Mark Snyder - Sept. 10

Leroy Walker - Sept. 10

Mary Lou Christie - Sept. 21

Cindy Erndt - Sept. 21

Carole Wenny - Sept. 26

Thanks - Anna Gawlik, Editor

Happy Gardening!!!

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