

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

November 2004

Vol. 4, Iss.10

At the Meeting:

Speaker - Our speaker for November was Marilyn Jankowski of Wild Birds Unlimited who gave us a lot of information on birdies and had some great products available for us to check out.

New Officers for 2005 -

President - John Alcorn
1st Vice President-Project Volunteers - Gary Gardener
2nd Vice President-Education - Kathy Walton
Treasurer - Ted Jagen
Secretary - Judy Wood

New Hospitality Chair - Carol Farmer graciously volunteered to be our new hospitality chair.

New Budget - The 2005 budget was finally approved. Some of the plans for 2005 are to finish the herb bed, level the slab next to the breezeway, irrigate the front flower bed, add a new veggie garden, begin the fruit orchard, have a sign made for the front, install a new shade house, and install sprinklers in the shade houses.

City of Clute Seminar - The seminar will be held on January 22 from 8-12. DiAnna will cover herbs, B. Brown and B. Ray will discuss propagation and John will take care of veggies.

Propagation and Grafting Class - This class will be held at the Extension office on January 29 from 9-12. The cost will be \$8 for pre-registration and \$10 at the door. Spread the word!

Intern Hours and Graduation - Interns need to turn in hours to determine their standing in order to graduate. Deadline for completing volunteer hours will be the end of March. Graduation is planned for the April meeting.

Dues Time - Ted Jagen is collecting dues for 2005: \$13. Make checks payable to BCMGA. You can bring your check to the meeting or you can mail it to Ted.

Spring Training Classes - Classes are scheduled to begin on February 8 and will last through March 10. They will be held on Tuesday and Thursday with two classes each day. Pat Gerard is making all of the arrangements for speakers. She needs volunteers to be present at the classes in the event something is needed. This is an excellent opportunity to get some continuing education hours. Please contact Pat by phone or email if you can help.

Cookbook - The publication of the cookbook has been postponed due to lack of recipes. At this point we have approximately 140 recipes. It was felt that this was not enough to really make it very appealing. Please continue to get your recipes to me. In fact, we'll all be bringing a dish to the Christmas party. What a great time to also bring your recipe!!!

Christmas Party - We will have our Christmas party at our next meeting. Dick Merrifield will be preparing ham and turkey. Everyone else should bring a side dish, salad, dessert - something yummy. HEY - What a great time to also bring your recipe for the cookbook!!! If you wish to participate in the gift exchange, bring a non-gender specific gift in the \$15 price range.

At the Demonstration Gardens:

News from the Greenhouse - New sprinkler heads have been installed in the greenhouse, the heater in the blue room has been adjusted, the herb bed is almost complete (it actually may be by now); measurements for irrigation pipe around the front bed were taken, and material for road maintenance has been ordered.

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

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

December 2	December 5	December 9
December 12	December 16	December 19*
December 23	December 26?	December 30

*Third Friday

Calendar of Events:

**see below for details*

new items in bold

2004 Dates:

Dec 3-4: Open House at The Vintage Rosery
 Dec 4: Backyard Orchard I: Growing And Eating Oranges, Grapefruits, Lemons and Other Citrus
 Dec 6: Introduction to Prescribed Burning
Dec 8: Lunch Bunch: Gardens of Hampton Court*
 Dec 11: Orchids for the Holidays
 Dec 14: December Meeting
 Dec 17: Third Friday
Dec 18: Weeds, Weather and Other Garden Woes *

2005 Dates:

Jan 5: An Introduction to Permaculture*
Jan 6: Backyard Orchard II: Care Of Fruit Trees*
Jan 7: Backyard Orchard III: Hands-On Fruit Tree Pruning - classes begin*
Jan 7: Permaculture - classes begin*
Jan 8: Backyard Orchard IV: Peaches, Plums, Pomegranates & Other Fruit*
 Jan 11: January Meeting
Jan 12: Lunch Bunch: Yard Art*
Jan 12: Permaculture - classes begin*

Jan 15: Arbor Day*
Jan 15: Fruit Tree Sale*
Jan 15: Fruit Trees for Metro Houston*
Jan 15: Texas Trees Garden Walk*
Jan 22: Clute Seminar
Jan 25: From Seed to Fruit...Tomatoes!*
Jan 29: BCMGA Grafting Seminar
Jan 29: "EarthKind Roses" Seminar*
Jan 30: Backyard Orchard V: Apples, Pears & Persimmons*
Feb 5: Backyard Orchard VI: Berries, Figs & Grapes*
 Feb 8: February Meeting
Feb 8: Spring Training Classes Begin
Feb 9: Lunch Bunch: Snakes*
Feb 19: Preparing Your Garden for Summer*
 Mar 8: March Meeting
Mar 19: Heritage Gardens Seminar
 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

Lunch Bunch: Gardens of Hampton Court - Date: December 8; Time: 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Join Mercer volunteer Sam Levine as he gives a slide tour of Hampton Court in Herefordshire, England. Set on an estate that dates back to the 15th century, the garden and grounds have been restored to full splendor and are a beautiful sight to behold. The gardens are also a stop on The Mercer Society's "Great Gardens, Castles and Palaces of Great Britain" cruise set for July 2005. This will be a great sneak preview to whet the appetite. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the program. Please call ahead for reservations.

Weeds, Weather and Other Garden Woes - Date: December 18; Time: 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.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. Please call ahead for reservations.

An Introduction to Permaculture - Date: January 5; Time: 7:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.; Location: Class located in the Leisure Learning building at 2990 Richmond; For further information contact: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Permaculture is being practiced all over the planet, and it is the most advanced design concept available for creating gardens, landscapes, and ecosystems. It also helps design sustainable buildings and societies that can prosper easily and efficiently for centuries while minimizing energy and materials use. In this orientation, learn about four courses over the next year that will help you turn your yard or farm into a vibrant bird and butterfly-filled space, resplendent with gourmet vegetables and fruits. If, after this orientation, you enroll in one or more of the four courses, you'll learn how to renew rural Texas and how to produce a city with less concrete, with fewer dead trees, unproductive lawns, and noisy leaf blowers. Students who complete four courses receive a Permaculture Designer's Certification. **FREE CLASS**

Backyard Orchard II: Care Of Fruit Trees - Date: January 6; Time: 6:15p.m.-8:45 p.m.; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). This class dispels the myth that fruit trees require too much work and are a waste of time. Learn basic organic fertilization requirements and techniques along with how to plant, water, mulch, and prune the many kinds of trees. Dr. Bob Randall. \$20, \$10 for members, free for community gardeners.

Backyard Orchard III: Hands-On Fruit Tree Pruning - Dates: January 7, 14, 21, 28, February 4, 11, 18, 25; Time: 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Learn by doing! Prune trees under the supervision of a skilled gardener. Winter is the season for this garden maintenance activity so critical to healthy trees and successful fruit production. We start with apples and peaches, then do pears, pomegranates, figs, bunch grapes, blackberries, citrus, persimmons, and then hybrid muscadine grapes. You will learn the most in this class if you take #2 above, and all of the hands-on sessions, but if you just show up for one session, we will teach you something. Bring long sleeves and pants, eyeglasses, gloves, and shears if you have them. Dr. Bob Randall. Diana Liga is Urban Harvest Community Gardens and Horticulture Coordinator. \$20 for all eight sessions, \$10 for members, free for community gardeners.

Backyard Orchard IV: Peaches, Plums, Pomegranates & Other Fruit - Date: January 8; Time: 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). These are some of the best tasting fruits you can grow, and many are beautiful ornamentals too. The ones we grow in our area are far better than the often sour and hard ones available in the market. However, they are a challenge to grow. This class covers the best varieties, how to grow them, and also discusses other fruits such as apricots, mayhaws, jujubes and feijoas. Ethan Natelson, MD is President of the North American Fruit Explorers. He grows a broad selection of fruit including many that are usually found only in research facilities. \$20, \$10 for members, free for community gardeners.

Lunch Bunch: Yard Art - Date: January 12; Time: 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Join Mercer volunteer Vicki Snyder for a fanciful journey through the world of garden art. From outlandish to sublime, from serious to whimsical, art plays a part in almost every landscape. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the program. Please call ahead for reservations.

Permaculture—The Ecological Foundations of Design - Dates: 7 Wednesdays - Jan 12, Jan 26, Feb 9, Feb 23, Mar 9, Mar 23, Apr 6 7:00 -9:30 pm; also one Saturday field trip February 19, 9:30-5:00; Location: Class located in the Leisure Learning building at 2990 Richmond; Contact: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). This course is one of three that can be taken in any order. It explains the permaculture of world and local ecosystems, and ties this information to techniques you can use to produce productive, sustainable gardens and communities. Topics include world ecosystems, climate, water conservation, water supply and waste treatment, soil, trees and forests, pests, and Texas ecosystems. *NOTE: The February 19 class meets at Animal Farm Permaculture Center, approximately two hours west of Houston. The Permaculture Guild Of Houston teachers in this class include John Dunbar, Bill Hancock, Dr. Bob Randall, Ray Sher, Jennifer Walker, Cas & Gita Van Woerden, and guest teacher Kirby Fry. Fee: \$135 (\$100 plus \$35 for room, materials and food).

Arbor Day - Date: January 15; Time: 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Visit Mercer and learn the best way to plant a tree, along with the best trees to plant in our area. Trees will be given away while supplies last. Help create a forest for the future, and beauty and shade to enjoy for a lifetime.

Fruit Tree Sale - Date: January 15, 2005; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Pick up high quality fruit trees and fruit-bearing plants proven to grow well in the Houston-area climate. Experts will be on hand to offer you advice. Don't miss the fruit class from 8:00 a.m.-8:55 a.m. to learn more about growing your fruit (see below).

Fruit Trees for Metro Houston - Date: January 15, 2005; Time: 8:00 a.m.-8:55 a.m. Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). This class will describe the fruit that will be for sale at the Urban Harvest fruit tree sale. It will describe characteristics of the fruit, taste, ease of care, and hardiness. There will be pictures of most fruit. Heidi Sheesley of Treeseach Farms and Ray Sher of Urban Harvest are instructing. Free class.

Texas Trees Garden Walk - Date: January 15; Time: 10:00 a.m.; Location: Texas Discovery Gardens, 3601 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Dallas; Phone: 214-428-7176. Everything you ever wanted to know about selecting, planting and maintaining beautiful trees in Dallas' challenging soil and climate: the advantages of choosing a native tree, the special characteristics of some popular Texas species, how to care for trees from above and below the ground -- how to prune branches and maintain good root systems to keep trees healthy. Don't miss this opportunity to get expert advice from our director of horticulture -- Tina Dombrowski. Texas Discovery Gardens members admitted free.

From Seed to Fruit...Tomatoes! - Date: January 25; Time: 6:15 p.m.-8:15 p.m.; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Explore the biology and the basic techniques for growing tomatoes from seed to fruit. Varieties, watering, fertilizers, sunlight, heat, and mulch will be discussed. Foolproof tips on dealing with pests, diseases, caging, harvesting, and plant rotation will be shared. An outline is provided. Mark Cotham co-authored Growing Tomatoes in Greater Houston: the Community Garden Experience. He is an attorney and a founding board member of Urban Harvest. \$20, \$10 for members, free for community gardeners.

"EarthKind Roses" Seminar - Date: January 29; Time: 11:00 a.m.; Location: Martha's Bloomers, 8101 Highway 6 Navasota; Phone: 936-870-4111. Presented by Gaye Hammond, Rose Specialist.

Backyard Orchard V: Apples, Pears & Persimmons - Date: January 30; Time: 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). These are three easy-to-grow warm weather fruits, but they are planted in winter. They are sweet, tasty, reliable, fairly pest-free and easy to care for. This class will focus on the best varieties both for flavor and adaptation to our climate. It will explain both chill requirements and dwarfing rootstocks. Grafting techniques will be demonstrated so you can learn how to get hard-to-purchase varieties. Free trees may be available in class. Ethan Natelson (see above). \$20, \$10 for members, free for community gardeners.

Backyard Orchard VI: Berries, Figs & Grapes - Date: February 5; Time: 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). If you plant strawberries in November, you will be eating them by March. In later years you will get possibly thornless blackberries, boysenberries, Youngberries, and even blueberries. Figs, too, are some of the easiest and most productive fruits we can grow. They are easy to grow from cuttings and are high in fiber. By selecting the right varieties, you can have delicious fruit for months. This winter you can plant fine disease resistant bunch grapes and the delicious hybrid muscadine grapes. In this class learn how to get good plants cheaply, how to plant and trellis, and how to care for these berries, figs and grapes. There will be grape cuttings given to students. Dr. Bob Randall, Jim Mullins owns Orchard Creek Farm and Vineyard. He grows dozens of kinds of bunch grapes and many berries at his "pick your own" farm. \$20, \$10 for members, free for community gardeners.

Lunch Bunch: Snakes - Date: February 9; Time: 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Join Mike Howlett from Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center for a discussion on common local snakes. Howlett tells why snakes can be great to have around and which ones to avoid. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the program. Please call ahead for reservations.

Preparing Your Garden for Summer - Date: February 19; Time: 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Are you ready for summer? You have dusted off your swimsuit and blown up the kids wading pool, but what about your garden? Attend this seminar at Mercer Arboretum to learn what you can do to have a beautiful garden throughout the summer. Please call ahead for reservations.

News to Know:

Change of Jobs - Gary Gardener is our new Vice President-Project Volunteers which is the position that Don Gerard previously held. Don will still be taking hours (WHICH NEED TO BE SENT TO HIM, BY THE WAY) but all other responsibilities will be handled by Gary.

Newsletter Schedule - Just a reminder that it's vacation time for the newsletter. The next one you will receive will be for January, which will come out late January or early February.

News and Notes from the Coordinator:

There's not a whole lot of news in this relatively slow month. We have had a real estate appraiser out at the experiment station. Whether that's good or bad, I don't know, but he did tell me that he didn't think the property was worth developing due to flooding problems. I hope that's good news for us.

As for the holidays, we, the Craig's, are having the rest of the clan in for Christmas—yes, I'm insane. But immediately afterward, it's adios family!, and the five of us are off to the mountains of New Mexico for a triplet birthday party in the snow.

That's all I have—for now.

Happy holidays, Everyone, and wishes for the warmth of family, and good friends.

In The Garden - Names:

from Ann McLain

There are a lot of reasons to learn (and use!) the scientific names for the plants we grow. One reason is to avoid the many confusions that common names can lead us into. When the tree guy looks at a scraggly specimen in our front yard he says "pin oak". But what I see in my mind when I hear that name is a symmetrical northern tree with sharply lobed leaves, brilliant red in fall. So what I say is, "huh?" He's talking about a tree named *Quercus nigra*, aka water oak or possum oak. I'm thinking about a tree named *Quercus palustris*. We have a failure to communicate.

Or when I talk about my great-grandmother's tiger lily which is a *Lilium*, and my neighbor shows me her tiger lily which turns out to be an orange daylily, genus *Hemerocallis*. Or when the "Ivy" class at the 4-H fair contains one English ivy (*Hedera*), three Pothos (or Devil's ivies), a German ivy (*Senecio*), and two philodendrons. We tried naming the class "English Ivy" the following year, which didn't change anything. So we gave up and changed the class to "Vines", since that was what it had become over the years. Common names are confusing because they slip and slide around too easily.

Another reason to learn the scientific names is so that we can look up new plants in a garden reference and find out how to give them proper care. So if I acquire a Texas sage, it would be good to know if it is a *Salvia texana* (short, blue, tolerates some shade, needs regular water), or a *Salvia coccinea* (taller, red, also tolerant of some shade and water). Or maybe it's *Leucophyllum frutescens* (a shrub with violet flowers, that must have perfect drainage and full sun). I need to know, so that I don't kill it before it ever reveals its true nature.

But one of the neatest benefits of learning the scientific names is that they often commemorate some really interesting people from the past. Usually plants are named with an eye to describing some particular characteristic of the plant. So the red maple is called *Acer rubrum*; "Acer" is the genus for true maples and "rubrum" is Latin for red. The magnificent flame colored red maple of the upper Great Lakes leaves it at that. But the red maples of

this part of the world are set apart as something special: *Acer rubrum drummondii*, or Drummond's red maple. And it turns out that Drummond has quite a few other plants as memorials. So who was this guy, Drummond?

Thomas Drummond was a plant-collector from Scotland. His first trip to North America was around 1825, when he accompanied an expedition to the Canadian Arctic. It was evidently a difficult experience, featuring extreme cold and near-starvation. But despite the rigors, Drummond had collected many interesting plant species, and British botanists were anxious to send him out again. In 1830 he crossed the Atlantic again, this time to Gulf Coast Texas, and this time as an expedition of one.

In 1830 Texas was part of Mexico. It was being settled, but the population was still pretty sparse, and it was a wild place. Drummond seems to have confined his collecting to the area of Austin's Colony, which turned out to have hazards enough. One spring, as he was setting out on a collecting trip from Velasco to Brazoria, the Brazos River spilled over in the Great Overflow of 1833, which covered most of our area with water up to twelve feet deep. As the water subsided, a cholera epidemic broke out, which devastated the colony. Drummond supposedly dosed himself with opium, and avoided the disease. But some months later, he wrote that he was covered in boils from head to foot.

We might expect that Drummond would have been anxious to get back to his family in Scotland, where it was cool and civilized. But it seems that he was caught up in the enthusiasm of the new republic to be. He observed that he could buy land quite cheaply, a thing that was no longer possible in Scotland. And there was so much more territory to explore and plants to collect. So in 1835 he headed back to Scotland to get his family and bring them to this new paradise. His route took him first to Florida and then to Cuba. He died in Havana somewhat mysteriously, most likely of disease. Perhaps a second brush with cholera got him.

All told, in his two North American expeditions, Thomas Drummond is credited with discovery of some 1500 plant species, plus many birds and mammals. Many are from that first, cold field trip, and although a number of those discoveries are in cultivation, they are not suitable for our Texas gardens. But about 700 of those new species were found here in Austin's Colony, and a surprising number of those are things we might want to plant. In addition to the Drummond red maple, his name also lives on in the rough-leaved dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*), the Western soapberry (*Sapindus drummondii*), and the Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus drummondii*). And then there is Drummond's phlox (*Phlox drummondii*), a spring annual that comes in marvelous colors.

I think this provides a really good reason to look at the scientific name of the plant I'm buying. It makes me feel a connection to some great characters. When I plant a thing called "drummondii", its name reminds me of Thomas Drummond, would-be Texian. He must have been tough as an old pair of boots, and curious as a cat. Plant a Drummond plant, and think of him.

Meet a Master Gardener - Gwen Collins:

From Viki Brushwood

Gwen Collins was born in Brownwood, Texas. Her family moved to Dallas and then to the Beaumont area. Gwen is licensed as a cosmetologist. She was more interested in the beauty products than working in a salon, so she decided to sell beauty supplies. Gwen came to Angleton because her former husband started working for Dow and has been here since 1975. She has a 24 year old son, a 22 year old daughter and a 5 year old granddaughter.



Traveling and living abroad was a wonderful experience for Gwen and her family. They spent time living in Germany, Holland and touring the rest of Europe. She also spent time in China. When she moved there her granddaughter was still a baby so she decided to be "Granny Gwen" to the international children she met. She always had her door open with crayons and coloring books for the kids to enjoy. She even got to hug a Panda while in China!

Gwen enjoys Country and Western music and Mexican food. She has also delved into the genealogy of her family. Animals are her favorite hobby. She has always been around a lot of animals. She has rescued many animals, two of them being "Mama Dog" and her pup from the Ice House in Angleton. (And Gwen doesn't even drink!) The Mama had a litter and Gwen didn't want them to be hit by a car on the busy street. She made

several trips to the Ice House to make friends with the dogs and assure the regular patrons that she was rescuing them to go to a good home rather than a shelter. The pup was very nervous and not use to people so Gwen took the pup and held it and petted it for 2 hours to show she was a friend and the dog has been with her ever since. "Mama Dog" is now living in Eagle Lake with a man who inherited greenhouses and is learning to be a gardener.

Gwen graduated in the second class of Master Gardeners. When I asked her why she wanted to become a MG she said that she was actually a "Lazy Gardener" and always enjoyed gardens. She said that Barbara Ross wanted to be a MG and made Gwen promise to be her "Partner in Crime" and take the class together! They did and Gwen thoroughly enjoyed it! Gwen also worked with the Dept. of Corrections so inmates could start some of the flower beds at the Demonstration Gardens and at the Fairgrounds. She loves being a MG and the activities. Her favorite flowers are Plumerias and Daturas, although it was hard for her to pick because she likes so many different flower and plants.

I enjoyed interviewing Gwen with her big smile and nurturing spirit. This is one "Partner in Crime" we are glad to call one of our Master Gardeners!

On the Herbal Side - Marvelous Mushrooms:

from DiAnna Munson

I found this article in Herbs for Health, December 2004 and wanted to share it with you.

Tough Living Makes Mighty Medicine

Why are medicinal mushrooms so gifted? Their strength comes from doing one of the most arduous jobs in nature – digesting dead or dying hardwood trees like oaks, elms, and plums. Shiitake, maitake and reishi are wood composters that infiltrate tough tree trunks and roots using multitudinous threadlike fingers, or mycelium, digesting and recycling nutrients back to the forest floor for the next generation of plants. Mushrooms are the fruit bodies that sprout when conditions are sufficiently cool and moist.

To do their job, these fungi must out-compete other fungi and microbes while dismantling the vast chemical complex of the tree. They must be aggressive yet defensive, a feat accomplished through biochemical combat. Mushrooms harvested while thus engaged possess potent bioactive chemicals, as well as nutrients gleaned from the tree. Consumed by mushroom-loving humans, that arsenal is then commuted to us. These are not the common meadow mushrooms usually sold in supermarkets, which are far less competitive in nature and less active medicinally.

The accompanying article goes on to discuss the virtues of each of the three mushrooms listed above. Shiitake (*Lentinula edodes*), Maitake (*Grifola frondosa*), and Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*) have meaty textures and rich, woody flavor. They have been proven effective against certain cancers, tumors, and various infections including AIDS and Hepatitis B in trials conducted at the Saitama Cancer Center in Japan. While eating these mushrooms is not going to provide the level of components found in the controlled botanical extracts, their long-term benefits are available by including them in a well balanced diet, where they provide minerals, vitamins, proteins and other beneficial chemicals, including linoleic acid and ergosterol, which help lower cholesterol and the risk of arteriosclerosis.

I have found a web site for ordering medicinal mushrooms – www.fungi.com. It is for a company named Fungi Perfecti LLC. I am giving them a try; anyone with tips on growing mushrooms?

Reflections from the Garden Goddess:

from Lee Withers

It is a strange time.

This is a strange time for us gardeners. This is the time of year for us to reflect on our accomplishments of the waning year and plan future projects. This is also the time of year when almost everyone that lives north of us is at a standstill in relation to their outside activities. The weather dictates what we can, for the most, part do or not do (unless you like to dress in plastic clothing head to toe and look like someone cleaning up a hazardous waste site). Some of us bide our time by getting in the Christmas spirit and decorating the inside and outside of

our houses while others even try to make cutesy little bird feeders out of oranges and apples for our feathered friends. Most of the far northerners (I am trying to be more politically correct and not say Yankees) are searching through their catalogs diligently looking for the best new super hybrid species of vegetable or flower seeds to plant or the hottest trend in bulbs or tropicals. Even though we southerners that reside along the Coastal Plain are not covered in snow, we are up to our galoshes in water. We (at least I am) already are suffering from a lack of sunshine and yearn for the hot sweaty days of early spring, right! Well, at least I do. Some of us are similar to the northerners and are caught up in the catalog feeding frenzy. I myself have several have several catalogs (some still in transit) with pages already turned down to indicate the precious items I wanted to order and I might even possibly do it this year. You see, catalogs for me are the modern day version of what my Grandma called window-shopping. The fun is in the looking and wishing and wanting even if you never really get down to buying all that you say you are going to buy. This really works much like a kid's Christmas list. A kid puts everything in the list their heart desires and wants but in reality, they know that they really can't get it all. Somehow, that doesn't stop all the wishing. Just like the time I wrote on my Christmas list a wish for a real pony – I knew there was no way but that didn't stop the wishing.

However, sadly enough I finally get a reality check while catalog shopping and making my wish list and my pocket book doesn't fit my desires and somehow seems to have shrunk a great deal. I guess this is an adult version to going to the cafeteria after Sunday church as a child and being told by my parents that my eyes were bigger than my stomach.

My wish list is finally getting a bit more practical (maybe I really am growing up – NAHHH) as I try to become slightly wiser and more sensible.

My list is more activity oriented than catalog driven this year.

I WILL plant the wildflower meadow that I started planning two years ago. I already bought the seed last year and most of it will still germinate and have already killed the grass twice and will have to do it again before I plant but it will get done. Somehow, something always got in the way and it didn't get finished. Such is the way of a garden goddess - always too many projects at once. There was that little sump pump thing and of course the little pond (from Hades) project. So it hasn't all been wasted time. Nevertheless, one of the greatest rewards has been the Herb bed – now named “Herben Paradise” until something better comes to mind about 3 a.m. some morning.

Now the final item on my wish list (maybe) is to create a small herb bed in my own backyard not as grandiose as a garden as the one in Angleton but still my own herb thing. My goal is to plan this in the fenced part in our pool area and eventually to have NO GRASS in that area.

Of course, if these items get accomplished I have backups to fill in the gaps. In the mean time I am getting ready for spring (in Texas this is our first summer) plotting and planning. Christmas is just a short step stone until spring.

Don't get me wrong I LOVE Christmas and want to savor all of it. It's just January and February are SOOOOOOOOOO dull and dreary and I have to start working on my wish list during that time or go crazy from lack of sunshine.

Enjoy Christmas to it's fullest but consider making your wish list – be it your super duper hybrid veggies or flowers or doing something on your own list of honey do's. What ever you decide you will be rewarded with the greatest gift on can give one's self - - - - self-satisfaction.

Happy Holidays to all my friends and readers – The Garden Goddess

Happy Birthday!

Happy December Birthday Wishes...

Tom Nolan - December 7

Christine Kern - December 17

Barbara Bruyere -December 19

Sherry Summers – December 20

Sandra Taylor - December 21

Thomas Collins - December 28

Kirby Rapstein - December 31

Happy January Birthday Wishes...

Don Gerard – January 4

Ellen Pedisich – January 14

Barbara Greeley - January 14

John Rosser – January 24

Judy Wood – January 31

Thanks - Anna Gawlik, Editor

Happy Gardening!!!

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