



What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

February 2005

Vol. 5, Iss. 2

At the Meeting:

Speaker - This month's speaker was Merrill O'Neal. He gave a talk on the efforts made to bring a botanical garden to Houston. It was really interesting, and we look forward to when the plans come to fruition.

Plant Sale - It's that time again, and we need to get out into the yard and start trimming our plants. Barbara Brown is looking for your cuttings. She needs tip cuttings 4" (if brought on a work day) to 6" long. It's best to bring them on a work day (Tuesday or Friday), so they can be potted right away.

Also, help is needed at the greenhouse to prepare for the plant sale. There are lots of things to be repotted. If you can help, head over there on one of the work days.

Logo Design Contest - Gil Livanec was the winner of the contest. He is making some final touches on the logo. We are planning to put the logo on items such as cards, posters, letterhead, and shirts.

Dorothy is trying to find an interest level with regard to denim or golf shirts that will have the new logo embroidered on them. She IS NOT ORDERING AT THIS TIME. Please let her know, however, if you plan on ordering in the future. This will help her get a realistic price on the shirts.

State Conference - The dates for the conference are May 5-8. Several people were interested in riding up to the conference on a chartered bus. John Alcorn is getting information on this. According to Donie, there is only one hotel in the area. It is a hotel and golf club and the entire conference is right there. Anyone interested in attending can go to <http://dcmga.com/> and there is a place to click on for all the info on the upcoming conference.

Brazosport College Classes - The MG instructors are busy again this spring at Brazosport College. The schedule of classes is on the calendar for anyone interested in attending. If you would like to instruct in the summer series, you should contact Kathy Walton now to get on the schedule. If you are able to be an instructor for the fall series, Kathy needs to know in May.

At the Demonstration Gardens:

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

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

March 1	March 4	March 8
March 11	March 15	March 18
March 22	March 25	March 29

News to Know a/k/a the "Help Wanted" Section:

An Urgent Plea for Help!!! - Don Gerard has sent out the following plea: Tom Hamilton was scheduled to present "Ponds and Water Plants" as one of the Brazosport College Courses. Tom has other obligations which prevent him from being able to do any classes at the college. The class was scheduled for Feb 28 and will have to be rescheduled. We need to present this particular program since people have already signed up for the series and some are interested in this particular subject. Would anyone care to volunteer to put together such a program. Tom has provided a copy of his outline, but he does not have a program which we can use. If you can help, please contact Don Gerard ASAP.

HELP !!!!

Christmas Gifts from the Garden Workshop - PLEASE HELP!

One workshop idea that was popular in the survey we did last fall was “Christmas Gifts from the Garden.” We are planning to present a workshop with that theme on a Saturday morning in October. This will be an event for adults and kids together, and it will offer an opportunity for families to have fun together creating something for the holidays. This will be a three-hour event, with several presentations of crafts to the whole group, followed by time at workstations to make a craft to take home.

WE NEED IDEAS -

- ! The crafts presented to the whole group could be more complicated ones. The breakout crafts need to be simple enough to be completed during the workshop.
- ! The crafts should relate to the garden theme: using plant materials grown in the garden, or using garden objects like pots, or made to be used by a gardener.
- ! Think about holiday themes: Gift items. Food items for entertaining. Holiday decorations. Holiday cards, wrapping paper, or gift tags. There must be many more categories.

WE NEED PEOPLE -

We need folks who are willing to demonstrate the crafts that are chosen. We also need people who can help publicize the event, take money at the door, help the participants with their activities, help with set-up and clean-up, etc.

If you have a great idea but you can't be at the event, we still want your idea. If you would like to help, but don't think you have original ideas, we still need you. If you have comments on our plan, we would like to hear that, too.

Please contact Ann (amclain@annsgarden.com, 979-798-2284) or Paula (p-craig@tamu.edu, 979-864-1558) if you can help with this event.

PLEASE HELP!

On the Herbal Side - De-Stress Yourself for Your Own Good:

from DiAnna Munson

This is a summary of a seminar presented by Dr. Daniel Chong, a licensed naturopathic physician from Portland, OR. I think the concepts are something we all can use in our daily lives.

The one most important factor in the prevention or the recovery from an illness is the state of one's mind. Mental/emotional stress in all of its many forms is a common denominator in the cause and prolonging of chronic illness. Our highly sophisticated medical care system does not have the same enthusiasm for health maintenance as it does in finding cures for chronic illnesses.

Stress is a perception each of us has complete control over. If your perception of your life is overly stressful and, more importantly, you don't take steps to help relieve the stress you place on your body, you will inevitably get sick. An elderly man of 104 years was asked the secret of his longevity, "If it starts to rain, I let it." We each need to learn to choose our battles more intelligently. We need to acknowledge the limitations in our lives and adapt to them. While we can not stop the rain, we can look at the situation as a chance to do something else that has been put on the back burners for awhile. My uncle was a farmer in the Panhandle of Texas, one of his sayings that I remember deals with rain – "God decided I needed to rest today, so He made rain." Uncle Bill lived to the ripe old age of 102. He would have made it "a day or two more" if the pickup he was working on had not fallen off the jack and crushed his chest.

We all must learn to relax, let go, and just be. Unfortunately, the hard part is learning how to do this. There is no "right way," each of us must plan our own method of diminishing the effects that the daily stresses we experience have on our minds and bodies. We must not forget that as human beings, we have the capacity to

become sick for no reason other than because of what we think. At the same time, we must try and remember that we also have the ability to change our minds.

To be continued...next month

Calendar of Events:	
<i>*see below for details</i>	<i>new items in bold</i>
2005 Dates:	
Mar 1:	BCMGA Spring Training Class: Annuals and Perennials*
Mar 1:	BCMGA Spring Training Class: Plant Disease Identification and Management *
Mar 2:	Propagation - Brazosport College
Mar 3:	BCMGA Spring Training Class: Vegetable Gardening*
Mar 3:	BCMGA Spring Training Class: Urban Trees*
Mar 5:	Garden Design Seminar*
Mar 5:	Dallas Blooms Begins*
Mar 5:	Austin Organic Gardeners' Annual Sale*
Mar 8:	March Meeting
Mar 8:	BCMGA Spring Training Class: Water Gardening*
Mar 8:	BCMGA Spring Training Class: Landscape Design*
Mar 8:	Butterfly Habitat Certification Class
Mar 10:	BCMGA Spring Training Class: Woody Ornamentals*
Mar 10:	Rain Gardens - Nature's Flood Control*
Mar 12:	Moveable Beauty: Easy Container Gardening*
Mar 12-13:	Peckerwood Gardens Open Days
Mar 14:	Critters & Plants - Brazosport College
Mar 15:	Organic Landscaping Using Ecology Begins*
Mar 16:	Floral Design
Mar 16:	Roses are Red...& Wonderful - Brazosport College
Mar 18-19:	March Mart Plant Sale*
Mar 19:	Visions for Brazos Valley Gardens*
Mar 19:	Heritage Gardens Seminar
Mar 19:	Fort Bend MG Perennial Sale
Mar 19-20:	First Austin African Violet Society's Annual Spring Show and Sale*
Mar 19-20:	Peckerwood Gardens Open Days
Mar 21:	Soil and Soil Additives - Brazosport College
Mar 23:	Turf - Brazosport College
Mar 26:	Propagation: Starting Your Own Plants in Containers*
Mar 26:	Herbs - From Greenhouse to Garden*
Mar 26-27:	Heart O' Texas Orchid Society's 34th Annual Orchid Show*
Mar 28:	Bees - Brazosport College
Mar 30:	Insect Management - Brazosport College
Apr 2:	Basics of Residential Horticulture – Part I
Apr 2:	Easy Gardening, Organic Style*
Apr 2:	Garden Line's Randy Lemmon Q&A*
Apr 2-3:	48th Annual Zilker Garden Festival*
Apr 4:	Landscape Design- Brazosport College
Apr 6:	Landscaping with Native Plants - Brazosport College
Apr 9-10:	Spring Plant Sale & Gardening Festival*
Apr 12:	April Meeting
April 16:	BCMGA Spring Plant Sale
Apr 23:	An Herb Affair*
Apr 30:	Children's Day in the Garden*
May 5-7:	State MG Conference, Denton
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

BCMGA Spring Training Class: Annuals and Perennials - Date: March 1; Time: 9:00 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. Speaker: Dr. William Welch, Professor and Extension Horticulturist.

BCMGA Spring Training Class: Plant Disease Identification and Management - Date: March 1; Time: 12:30 p.m.; Location: Texas Cooperative Extension Office, 21017 CR 171, Angleton TX 77515 979-864-1558, 979-388-1558 or 281-756-1558 ext. 112. Speaker: Dr. Thomas Isakeit, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist, Plant Pathology and Microbiology.

BCMGA Spring Training Class: Vegetable Gardening - Date: March 3; Time: 9:00 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. Speaker: Tom LeRoy, Horticulture Agent, Montgomery County.

BCMGA Spring Training Class: Urban Trees - Date: March 3; Time: 12:30 p.m.; Location: Texas Cooperative Extension Office, 21017 CR 171, Angleton TX 77515 979-864-1558, 979-388-1558 or 281-756-1558 ext. 112. Speaker: Melanie Kirk, Extension Program Specialist-Urban Community Forestry.

Garden Design Seminar - Date: March 5; Time: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.; Location: Antique Rose Emporium San Antonio Display Gardens; Contact: Robbi Will 210-651-4565. Join Mike Shoup, owner of The Antique Rose Emporium, as he takes you through the steps necessary to incorporate antique roses into your garden. Learn about the best varieties for your garden, cultural practices, such as training, pruning and soil amendments and companion planting. Enjoy a gourmet box lunch and take home a FREE 2-gallon rose. Cost of the seminar is \$35.00. Reservations and payment must be made before 3-3-05.

Dallas Blooms - Date: March 5 - April 10; Time: 9am to 5pm daily. Location: Dallas Arboretum; 8617 Garland Rd., Dallas; Phone: 214-515-6500. Dallas Blooms is a celebration of spring at the Dallas Arboretum, which is arguably one of top five floral display gardens in North America. This year's festival features more than 400,000 spring-blooming bulbs, 20,000 spring-flowering azaleas, 70,000 pansies and violas and thousands of other spring blooming annuals and perennials. This year's festival theme is Proud as a Peacock featuring two 15-foot peacock topiaries whose tails are 2100-square-feet and 800-square feet filled with spectacular spring flowers.

Austin Organic Gardeners' Annual Sale - Date: March 5; Time: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.; Location: Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin; Phone: 512.477.8672. Sale of vegetable, herb, and ornamental transplants. Parking is limited, so consider carpooling or using CapMetro's Tour of the Town bus.

BCMGA Spring Training Class: Water Gardening - Date: March 8; Time: 9:00 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. Speaker: Cindy Gonzales, Water Gardener.

BCMGA Spring Training Class: Landscape Design - Date: March 8; Time: 12:30 p.m.; Location: Texas Cooperative Extension Office, 21017 CR 171, Angleton TX 77515 979-864-1558, 979-388-1558 or 281-756-1558 ext. 112. Speaker: Barbara Ray, Master Gardener, Brazoria County.

BCMGA Spring Training Class: Woody Ornamentals - Date: March 10; Time: 9:00 a.m.; Location: Caldwell Nursery. Speaker: Cay Dee Caldwell.

Rain Gardens - Nature's Flood Control - Date: March 10; Location: City of Bellaire, Recreation Center, 5125 Laurel, Bellaire; Phone: 713-662-8280. City of Bellaire Recreation Dept. Fee: \$20 - Bellaire residents, \$25 - Houston residents.

Moveable Beauty: Easy Container Gardening - Date: March 12; Time: 10:00 a.m. OR 2:00 p.m.; Location: Antique Rose Emporium, Independence Display Gardens, 10,000 Highway 50, Brenham; Phone: 800-441-0002; Contact: Jean Shoup arebuzz@industryinet.com; Cost: \$40.00 per Workshop. Have you ever wondered how you can always have attractive plantings year round in your garden? Join Antique Rose Emporium staff, PK and Gail, as they take you through all the nuances and mystery of growing beautiful plant combinations in containers that can be moved with the seasons. After leaving this "hands on" workshop, you will have your very own garden in a container to take home, completed with five plants made from a wide selection. Plan to get your hands in the dirt. Register for either workshop by calling 979-836-5548 or by sending payment to 10,000 FM 50, Brenham, TX 77833.

Organic Landscaping Using Ecology - Dates: 12 Tuesdays: March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12, 19, 26, May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday); Cost: \$160. Develop expertise in the "fine art" of organic landscaping and the science of ecological land management. This course will include useful concepts, "tricks of the trade" and cost saving techniques that will help you start developing the organic landscape you desire. These landscapes include hardy, resourceful plants and features that offer beauty and other benefits such as habitat for wildlife, food for people and

recreational enjoyment. Organic Landscapes also require less time and money to maintain. The course describes landscape construction, explains how to select native and non-native plants that will thrive, discusses landscape and soil fertility management, and ecological pest control.

The course is under the direction of Mark Bowen. Bowen is one of the most well known garden authorities in the area. He is author of *Habitat Gardening for Houston and Southeast Texas*, *Naturalistic Landscaping for the Gulf Coast*, *The Bayou Planting Guide*, and is design contributor to the book *Home Landscaping: Texas* by Roger Holmes. Topics And Presenters include: Ecological Landscape Design Concepts by Mark Bowen; Walks, Patios, Arbors, Trellises & More by Suzy Fischer; Bed Preparation, The Soil Food Web & Mulching by John Ferguson; Organic Fertilizers and Disease Management by Ron Breland; Groundcovers And Vines by B J. Kolenovsky; Ornamental Grasses And Coastal Plants by Mark Fox; Native And Nearly Native Shrubs And Trees by Mike Anderson; Perennial Edibles For The Landscape by Bob Randall; Nature Ponds And Wetland Ecosystems by Ron Jones; Irrigation by Angela Chandler and Howard Star.

March Mart Plant Sale - Date: March 18-19; Time: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Enjoy March Mart and experience a plant sale like no other. There will be many plant categories to choose from, including "growers' choice" and "staff picks." All of the plants at March Mart thrive in the Houston area. Food and beverages will be available for purchase at Mercer's Bluebonnet Café, and shuttle buses will run all day from the parking areas to the front gate.

Visions for Brazos Valley Gardens - Date: March 19; Time: 11:00 a.m.; Location: Martha's Bloomers, 8101 Highway 6 Navasota; Phone: 936-870-4111. Presentation give by Dr. Bill Welch.

First Austin African Violet Society's Annual Spring Show and Sale - Date: March 19, 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and March 20, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Location: Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin; Phone: 512-477-8672. Our theme this year is "Violets in the Caribbean". For additional information call show chairman Jeanette Pursley at 512-243-2289.

Propagation: Starting Your Own Plants in Containers - Date: March 26; 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); Cost: \$20, \$10 for members, free for community gardeners. Discuss various sexual and asexual ways to start plants from seeds, cuttings, divisions, and layering. Topics include the storage of seeds, seed dormancy, and methods of sprouting hard-to-sprout seeds. The class will also include a hands-on workshop on propagation by cuttings. Learn various methods of making the cuttings and preparing them for sticking. Also learn various growth media and the importance of controlling temperature and humidity. Bring a pair of small pruning shears. Other materials will be provided. This class really will produce some fine plants! Jean Fefer, PhD, is a Harris County Master Gardener, an Urban Harvest Organic Vegetable Specialist, and a graduate of the Master Gardener Specialist Plant Propagation Course. She is Vice-President of Urban Harvest and Co-Chair of its Community Gardens Committee.

Herbs - From Greenhouse to Garden - Date: March 26; Time: 11:00 a.m.; Location: Martha's Bloomers, 8101 Highway 6 Navasota; Phone: 936-870-4111. Presentation give by Ann Wheeler, founder Log House Herb Farm.

Heart O' Texas Orchid Society's 34th Annual Orchid Show - Date: March 26-27; Time: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Location: Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin; Phone: 512-477-8672.

Easy Gardening, Organic Style - Date: April 2; Time: 10:00 a.m.; Location: The Vintage Rosery 16630 Highway 36 (across from the Needville High School); Phone: 979-793-2888. Jennifer Appel, Landscape Architect, radio host and organic gardener will explain how to reduce the time spent "working" in your garden while increasing the enjoyment of your garden. She will talk about fixing your soil, reducing water requirements and how to grow blooming plants of all types without using any synthetic chemical based products. This seminar is free.

Garden Line's Randy Lemmon Q&A - Date: April 2; Time: 1:00 p.m.; Location: The Vintage Rosery 16630 Highway 36 (across from the Needville High School); Phone: 979-793-2888. Randy Lemmon, host of The Garden Line on 950 KPRC radio will be at The Vintage Rosery answering your gardening questions. Bring samples of problem plants or soil. There will be lots of sample products and prizes given away, as well as KPRC promotional items. Free.

48th Annual Zilker Garden Festival - Date: April 2 & 3; Time: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Location: Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin; Phone: 512-477-8672. Admission to the garden on these 2 days is \$5 and includes admission to the festival. This annual festival heralds the start of the gardening season for many Austin-area gardeners and has something for every member of the family. There are clinics for gardeners, an activity area for children, music and food. Colorful booths with garden-related crafts of all sorts are everywhere; potters, soap makers, jewelers and other craftspeople sell their wares. There are plants of all sorts by the thousands - herbs, orchids, cacti, succulents, annuals, natives, perennials, houseplants, water garden specimens - as well as the tools, soils and best of all, information to grow them.

Spring Plant Sale & Gardening Festival - Date: April 9-10; Location: Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin; Phone: 512-292-4100. Buy native plants and seeds and get expert advice that will help your garden grow. This unique sale features more than 23,000 hard-to-find natives and 300 plant species. Meet authors Michael Lind (Bluebonnet Girl, April 9) and Kathi Appelt (Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers: How A First Lady Changed America, April 10). April 9-10, 2005; member preview sale, April 8.

An Herb Affair - Date: April 23; Time: 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.; Location: Antique Rose Emporium San Antonio Display Gardens; Contact: Robbi Will 210-651-4565. Join the Comal County Master Gardeners as they delight your senses with the wonderful exploration of herbs. You will be exposed to ample varieties of demonstrations, recipes, samples and ideas. This is sure to be a big hit!

Children's Day in the Garden - Date: April 30; Time: 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.; Location: Antique Rose Emporium San Antonio Display Gardens; Contact: Robbi Will 210-651-4565. Join the Bexar County Master Gardeners for a day especially for our younger friends. We will be offering hands on fun and educational activities with garden and outdoor themes. You are sure to take home some great crafts and pleasant memories. Free.

Reflections from the Garden Goddess:

from Lee Withers

How to tell it you are a real true to life gardener ---

There have been mostly likely thousands of books, or least a whole bunch of them written about how to garden and on becoming a better gardener. However, to my limited knowledge of the most important things in life I don't think anyone as important as me has ever written about how to tell if you really are a gardener. At least I'm pretty sure, I haven't. I say this because I have met some people that like to buy plants and have someone else stick them in the ground, say perhaps a husband or a hired yard man. There are also some people that like to collect many different, unusual plants but that in it self doesn't make one a tried and true dirt groveling, on your knees gardener. I recently met a lovely lady that said she loved plants but didn't like to go outside – now that restriction will severely limit how you apply your gardening skills. Maybe there might be a new market for a virtual reality game about gardening without going outside.

I have pondered this idea about how to tell if you really are a gardener for a long time – about 5 months –, which is a considerably extended amount of time for me to relegate to my multi-tasking mind. (This is where my husband would say disorganized.) Therefore, to clear up this matter I have devised a checklist to help you judge yourself to see if you really have become a bonafide gardener.

You know you are a gardener when . . .

You begin to look at wide brimmed straw hats as an outdoor fashion accessory and think you look good in one of them.

Outings with the "girls" are to visit plant nurseries a far distance and these become all day field trips

You want not just one of each new plant but three or five of something new and spectacular.

You begin tearing out pages from garden magazines and begin a notebook of various subjects related to gardening.

You really do enjoy pulling weeds (my favorite anger management control – think of it as an environmentally safe form of basket weaving and less costly too).

Your yard is different from any one else's on your street and your neighborhood too.

Nailbrushes live near all of your sinks in the house.

You are enamored with gloves and always stop by the glove display to check out new models.

You actually turn down some passalong plants because they don't fit your plan.

You finally realize that you really do have a plan after all and your lovely vision actually becomes a reality.

You see grass as an enemy – especially #%*=&@% Bermuda grass.

You are always looking for the better garden tool

Garden department clerks begin to know you by sight and some know your name.

You realize you definitely know more about plants than almost anyone working at one of the orange and yellow nurseries so prevalent in our area

You actually like the rich earthy smell of compost and manure doesn't bother you.

Earthworms are your friends and you try to save them after a heavy rain.

Armadillos are your enemies but you seem to tolerate rabbits (at least some of us do).

You have considered doing a rain dance – definitely have prayed for rain in the blistering heat of the summer and during the winter may have prayed asking for the rain to stop.

You have realized that working in the yard is an excellent form of therapy and much cheaper in the long run than a psychologist and besides the work gets done.

You move the edge of your flowerbeds out about 18 inches when you husband has left on a trip so he doesn't fuss about the loss of his sea of grass

You plant trees you know will never be mature during your lifetime but enjoy the fact that future generations will enjoy them.

You consider doing bodily harm to one of the yard guys for mowing down one of your little trees but instead you go pull weeds – it keeps you out of trouble and finishes up a flowerbed.

Your husband notices that there are definitely more butterflies on the property now than when we first moved here.

You have moved past the "Grow Darn It Stage" to really trying to plant something in the best environment and working to maintain it (DUH).

You teach a class on of your gardening strengths and someone comments on your passion for your gardening.

You plant extra veggies or herbs for the critters.

The historical or romance novels that had been your bedtime reading are now been replaced with gardening books and catalogs.

You expand your own personal gardening interests - try herbs, or orchids, or veggies or all of the above.

You read about studies that have proven hobbies like gardening help stave off dementia and Alzheimer's, but wonder why you can't find your clippers.

You relish the birds and butterflies you now see on your property and have been known to run into the house with child-like enthusiasm to get someone to share your joy.

You are almost giddy when spring begins to sneak its way into February.

You read unusual articles by people who tend to think they are gardener writers.

How you rated:

0 – you accidentally picked this newsletter thinking it was yours (but it's really your spouse's) and you are on the way to the reading room.

1 to 4 - you may or may not be really interested in gardening - just a wanna be gardener or just starting into Master Gardening.

5 to 9 - you are a novice gardener and given some time to mature you will become as obsessed as one of the writers.

10 to 15 - you probably are a Master Gardener, Botanist, Horticulturalist or some important other kind of "ist."

16 and more - You are a bonafide garden nut – you tend to obsess about your interests and you spread your passion to anyone near you regardless of their willingness to listen, you find yourself talking to strangers at garden center giving them advice, you have been known to have dirt under your nails this time of year and dirt on your shirt.

Happy Gardening – May all your flowers bloom, your veggies fruit and the grass not grow too fast.

In The Garden - Vines:

from Ann McLain

Here along the Gulf Coast is a great place to get addicted to vines. There are so many that do well here. All we need to do is to look around in our local woods to see that this is likely to be so. Vines are everywhere.

Plants have a bunch of different ways to make a living. Building a sturdy scaffolding to lift your leaves above all the neighbors is a strategy that costs a lot in terms of energy and resources. You have to suck up a lot of water and minerals, and you have to catch a lot of sunlight to manufacture starches and cellulose. And then once you deposit enough cellulose and lignin to make a stiff sturdy trunk, all that effort is locked up permanently. Of course, a lot of photosynthetic individuals – call them trees – have chosen that strategy.

But there are other plants (opportunists all) that have gone the sneaky route. Why use up all those resources when you can quite literally piggy back on some other plant's effort? That's the vine strategy. Because nearly all the tissues of a vine are active photosynthetic factories, they are very productive compared to a tree. Because that lengthy vine habit spreads all that machinery across all the available sunshine, vines are very productive when compared with much smaller and shorter herbaceous plants. This means the vines tend to be rampant growers (how many other plants can put on thirty feet of growth in a year?), they need a lot of nutrients, and they can suck up a lot of water. Water is a critical element for many vines; they need good moisture at the roots, and they also need to conserve water all along their length. Where the vine habit gets expensive is in the pumping of water and nutrients along those long vascular bundles from root to top. Conserving moisture is easier in a humid climate; therefore vines tend to come from humid places – sound like home?

Vines come in several categories defined by how they climb. Some don't actually climb at all – they should be described as leaners. A great example of that is the "climbing" rose. Roses don't have any of the specialized structures or skills that allow most vines to climb. But clever roses take full advantage of people who are willing to help them up the trellis or tree by weaving them through and tying them on. And actually, many the slender

stemmed climbing roses are quite capable of hanging onto the trellis or tree once they get well woven into it, where their thorns can then keep them from falling out.

Other vines can help themselves up onto the support through a process called twining. The growing tips of most plants wave around as they grow, but the rapid elongation of vines seems to exaggerate this action. When a twiner touches something solid, it bends around it. This is explained by differential growth – the cells on the side of the stem that touche the solid object slow down, while the cells on the other side speed up their growth. That causes the stem to bend.

Some vines add an extra measure of security to this scheme, sort of like seatbelts. They have short lateral tendrils that are also waving around searching for support. When a tendril contacts a support it coils around it rapidly and tightly. Then the whole tendril continues the coil; it can actually pull the vine stem up against the support. And if you've ever needed to redirect a gourd vine, you know that tendrils never let go.

Both twiners and tendril formers need open supports, such as fences or arbors. Vines with tendrils sometimes have a hard time on trellises made with wide wood strips; the tendrils just can't seem to get a good grip around the wood. On the other hand, tendril vines can often latch on to irregularities in bark and thus climb trees easily.

Then there are the vines that can go straight up the wall with no assistance. The wall climbers generally have tiny little holdfasts along the stem that actually stick to the wall. And no, these vines don't actually eat your house. But they can leave a lot of permanently attached holdfasts behind if you ever need to tear the vine down, and that can be a mess to deal with. Their close clinging to the wall also traps a lot of moisture and debris, which may cause problems on a wood wall. So you need to think carefully before planting English ivy or creeping fig.

One property of many vines that fascinates me is that you can almost see them grow. I can go out each morning and see that the tendrils on the gourd vines have made two or three more turns overnight, or that the honeysuckle is a bar higher on the trellis. It's harder to see the change in sunflowers that are simply getting bigger.

And while I'm out there watching the vines grow, I like to take note of which way the twiners and tendrils turn. Some vines turn clockwise; others twist counter-clockwise. But on any given vine all the tendrils twine the same way. This doesn't have anything to do with which hemisphere you're in, but it does have everything to do with what species you're looking at. Each vine has a characteristic direction that its growing shoots wave around. Check it out for yourself.

Not all vines are super fast growers. But while you're out there watching your coral vine to see if it twists left or right, you might want to not stand too close.

Garden Checklist:

by Dr. William C. Welch, Landscape Horticulturist, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M University

- ✿ Prepare beds for planting flowers and vegetables. You may want to consider renting or buying a garden tiller to speed up the process; however, a strong back and a garden fork will still do an excellent job.
- ✿ For every 100 square feet of bed area, work in a several-inch layer of either compost, pine bark or sphagnum peat moss, plus 5 pounds of balanced fertilizer.
- ✿ Check with your local county agent for the average last killing freeze date for your area. Remember that killing freezes can occur after this date.
- ✿ Pruning of evergreens and summer flowering trees and shrubs should be completed in early March. Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs as soon as they finish blooming.
- ✿ Select and order caladium tubers as well as geranium and coleus plants for late April and early May planting. Do not plant caladiums until soil temperature reaches 70 F.
- ✿ As camellia and azalea plants finish blooming, fertilize them with three pounds of azalea-camellia fertilizer. Check mulch on azalea and camellia beds and add where needed.

- ✿ In North Texas there is still time to plant seeds of your favorite annuals in flats to be transplanted out-of-doors when danger of frost is past.
- ✿ Beware of close-out sales on bare-root trees and shrubs. The chance of survival is rather low on bare-root plants this late in the season. Your best bet at this time of year is to depend on container-grown or balled-and-burlapped plants for landscape use.
- ✿ Start hanging baskets of petunias and other annuals for another dimension in landscape color.
- ✿ Plant dahlia tubers in fertile, well-drained soil.
- ✿ Dig and divide summer and fall flowering perennials just before they initiate their spring growth.

Source: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/mar04/Mar04checklist.html>

Date: February 24, 2005

Happy Birthday!

Happy March Birthday Wishes...

Barbara Ray - March 4

Thanks - Anna Gawlik, Editor

Happy Gardening!!!

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