

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

September 2005

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Well, thanks to Rita, my newsletter schedule got messed up, so I'm not getting this out when I had planned. Sorry to all of you who prefer to receive this by mail. Hopefully next month it will get mailed.

There's no "At the Meeting" section this month because I wasn't at the meeting. Since Severin is in real school now and needs to go to bed at a decent time, I'm not able to attend the meetings when my husband is unavailable.

I'd really like to keep this section going, so if there is someone who would be willing to take notes and either email or give them to me over the phone, I'd appreciate it.

At the Demonstration Gardens:

from Ray Michalik

Randy tucker has brought his tractor out and worked the spot where the new garden will be, which is east of the Greenhouse. He has it looking very good. He also will cut the grass out front this week in preparation for the plant sale. We didn't have much damage to any of the plants from Rita's wind, just a little wind whipped, but they are all looking OK now. All the roses that were given to us by Caldwell's Nursery in Rosenberg have been trimmed up and are looking good. All that could be named were named and the ones that couldn't were not due to no tags on them.

Work Days - Tuesdays and Fridays from 7:30/8:00 a.m. until noon. Feel free to come out on non-workdays. You'll always be able to find some weeds to pull if nothing else!

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

October 4	October 7	October 11
October 14	October 18	October 21
October 25	October 28	

News to Know:

Volunteer Opportunity - It seems my suppliers of articles for the newsletter has dwindled. If anyone is interested in writing an article or column for the newsletter, your contribution is very welcome. The more submissions we have from our members, the better the newsletter is!

2006 Dues - Ted Jagen is going to begin collecting 2006 membership dues (\$13) at the October meeting. You can either pay Ted at the meeting or send their payment to him at: Ted Jagen, 13805 CR 282, Alvin, TX 77511.

November Meeting Date Change - The November meeting date has been reset to the 9th because of elections on the 8th. Please mark this change on your calendars!!!

Volunteer Hours - Don Gerard is bored and is hoping that some of us will turn in our hours. Apparently his spreadsheet is pretty empty. Take a minute and get your hours together, so Don will have something to do!

Historian Needed - Do you like to scrapbook??? If so, we need you to be the BCMGA Historian. We have gobs of pictures. Most are organized. If you are interested, let me know.

Dollar Value of Volunteer Service - In April, Paula sent out an email with this info, which I thought was worth making sure everyone saw: "With over 10,000 reported hours for 2004, the value of BCMGA volunteerism is

close to \$180,000, and this certainly doesn't capture the total value to the community of all your organization does. Be proud!"

Calendar of Events:	
*see below for details	new items in bold
2005 Dates:	
Sept 29-	Oct 20: Growing Transplants With A Focus On Tomatoes*
Oct 30: Dallas Blooms Autumn*	Oct 21-22: American Bamboo Society Conference*
Oct 6: Volunteer Appreciation Dinner	Oct 22: Randy Lemmon's GardenLine*
Oct 8: Fall Plant Sale	Oct 22-23: Fall 2005 Advanced Design Workshop*
Oct 11: October Meeting	Oct 24: Sell What You Grow at a Green Market*
Oct 12: Lunch Bunch: Fall Herbs*	Oct 29: Mushroom Walk*
Oct 12: Green Roofs*	Oct 29: Nature Ponds and Wetlands*
Oct 14-18: The Craft and Art of Bamboo*	Oct 29: Forecasting Christmas Decorations*
Oct 15: Native Wood Jewelry*	Nov 3: Ecological Pest Management*
Oct 15: Fall Bulbs-Especially Daffodils*	Nov 4: 18th Annual Fall Festival of Roses*
Oct 15-16: African Violet Show & Sale*	Nov 4-5: Regional Master Gardener Conference
Oct 15-16: Peckerwood Garden Open Days*	Nov 9: November Meeting
Oct 16: Tsukimi: Traditional Japanese Moon Viewing*	Nov 28: Sell What You Grow at a Green Market*
Oct 18: Master Gardener Continuing Education: Chrysanthemums *	Dec 13: December Meeting
Oct 19: Seasoned With Thyme - A Tasteful Seminar*	

Dallas Blooms Autumn - A Palette in Bloom - Date: September 24 - October 30, 2005; Time: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm daily. Location: Dallas Arboretum; 8617 Garland Rd., Dallas; Phone: 214-515-6500. The theme of the 2005 festival is *A Palette in Bloom*, featuring a floral bed in the shape of a painter's palette filled with 4,000 autumn flowers including white bronze-leaved begonia for the palette and an ever-changing spectrum of other brightly colored flowers and foliage for the dollops of paint

GARDEN FEATURES

- 100,000 fall-blooming flowers including salvia, coleus, ornamental grasses and 18,000 richly colored chrysanthemums
- Tom Thumb's Pumpkin Patch with thousands of pumpkins available for purchase
- Children's hay bale maze constructed of 500 bales of hay

EVERY DAY

- Piano on the Pergola sponsored by Rory Myers
- Hay rides (\$1 per rider)

WEEKENDS

- Children's crafts
- Soothing music throughout the Garden

WEEKDAYS

Kimberly Clark's Mommy & Me Mondays - September 26, October 3, 10, 17 and 24, 9am - 2pm

- Children's crafts, pioneer petting zoo and face-painting
- Mommy & Me Ballet by Janie Christy School of Dance
- Storytelling
- Gymboree of Dallas and Plano
- Hay rides (\$1 per rider)

Tiny Tots Tuesdays - September 27, October 4, 11, 18 and 25, 9am - 2pm

- Children's crafts, pioneer petting zoo and face-painting
- Tiny Tots Yoga by YMCA at White Rock
- Storytelling
- Kindermusik by Ms. Lisa
- Hay rides (\$1 per rider)

Two-for-One Wednesdays - Get one admission free with purchase of regular priced adult ticket (\$8) when you bring in a copy of a Dallas Morning News ad.

Lunch Bunch: Fall Herbs - Date: October 12; Time: 12:00 pm to 1 pm; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. The Herb Lady, Marilyn O'Conner, discusses great herbs for fall. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the show; herbs will be for sale following the program. Please call ahead for reservations.

Green Roofs - Date: October 12; Time: 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Roofs covered in plants or green roofs are spreading across the nation. Green roofs reduce urban heat islands, slow flood waters, and reduce air conditioning bills. In the Zona Verde garden site at the University of Houston's Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, we will study these benefits and see the progress of the 6'x6' green roof mockup designed and planted by students. Varying roof slopes, locations, structure and program costs will be discussed. Chula Ross Sanchez holds a Masters in Architecture from The University of Houston, is a lecturer at the Gerald Hynes School of Architecture there, and is a member of Green Team Houston. Class is located at University of Houston; directions will be e-mailed to registrants and may be picked up at the UH office. Free for community gardeners, \$10 members, \$25 nonmembers.

The Craft and Art of Bamboo - Date: October 14 through 18; Time: Registration and refreshments: 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.; class: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. The Mercer Society members' fee: \$40/day or \$175 for all five days; non-members' fee: \$50/day or \$225 for all five days. Class is limited to 24 participants. Instructor: Carol Stangler; Assistant: Michael James Long. Through demonstrations, slides and studio time, this five-day workshop offers a hands-on introduction to working with bamboo, and explores the versatile technical and artistic possibilities of bamboo.

Beginning with harvesting bamboo from a nearby grove, students will learn the basics of caring for bamboo including the techniques of cleaning, storing, curing, sawing, splitting, smoothing, joining, finishing, and preserving bamboo. Information on bamboo's botanical structure and general instructions for growing and containing bamboo will also be covered.

Emphasis will be placed on getting comfortable with the tools and techniques of working with bamboo. Enough studio time will be allotted for students to pursue individual projects. These may include sculptural and functional objects for the home, such as cups, containers, ladles, and flower vases, or outdoor projects such as a creating a bamboo trellis or fence panel. In addition, the group will construct a bamboo screen or fence for Mercer's garden.

Contact Mercer or visit their Web site at www.hcp4.net/mercerc, for more information.

Native Wood Jewelry - Date: October 15; Time: 9 am to noon; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Join Charles Cole to learn how to make jewelry from native wood and take home a finished product. Supplies will be provided. Cost is \$5. Call for reservations.

Fall Bulbs-Especially Daffodils - Date: October 15; Time: 11:00 am; Location: Martha's Bloomers, 8101 Highway 6 Navasota; Phone: 936-870-4111. With Margaret Cherry.

African Violet Show & Sale - Date: October 15-16; Time: 9:30 am - 4:30 pm; Location: Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin; Phone: 512-477-8672. Hosted by First Austin African Violet Society.

Peckerwood Garden Open Days - Date: October 15-16; Location: Peckerwood Gardens, 20571 F.M. 359, Hempstead; Phone: 979-826-3232.

Tsukimi: Traditional Japanese Moon Viewing - Date: October 16; Time: 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm; Location: in the Taniguchi Japanese Garden at Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin; Phone: 512-477-

8672. Ancient Japanese court music by Austin Gagaku Group under the full moon, paths lit by 200 paper lanterns, moon cakes and green tea. More info at <http://isgaustin.org>.

Master Gardener Continuing Education: Chrysanthemums - Date: October 18; Time: 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. Join Jackie Yarotsky of the Chrysanthemum Society for her program Chrysanthemums: Growing, Showing and Arranging. The program includes information on all aspects of growing these wonderful perennial garden plants. Call for reservations.

Seasoned With Thyme - A Tasteful Seminar - Date: October 19; Time: 10:30 am -11:30 am; Location: Antique Rose Emporium, Independence Display Gardens, 10,000 Highway 50, Brenham; Contact: Lynn Smith 979-836-5548. Join us in the garden for a fun filled morning of herbal delights! Guest speaker, Ann Wheeler, owner of Log House Herb Farm, Magnolia TX, will demonstrate the "how to's" of planting, care and maintenance of cool season herbs, colorful ornamental cabbages, kales, chards, etc. Ann's deep knowledge and infectious enthusiasm are guaranteed to inspire your senses. Be invigorated by new fragrances, tastes and innovative ways to use any type of garden container (old shoes, broken pots, tubs, etc.) to create a bounty of flavor by your own backdoor. Come share with us the pleasures of nature and beauty of the gardens. No registration fee is required, but seating is limited. Please RSVP to 979-836-5548 by October 16, 2005 to save your spot!

Growing Transplants With A Focus On Tomatoes - Date: October 20; Time: 6:15 pm -8:15 pm; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Every spring and fall gardeners search the stores for the right varieties of peppers and tomatoes. Often, they settle for a poor selection of non-organic, expensive transplants. In this class, learn to grow transplants from seed with everything from a greenhouse you build to a light you can buy for less than \$15 that will grow 100 plants. Diane Norman is co-owner of the Arcadia Nursery & Farm. She grows and sells organic transplants and vegetables. Free for community gardeners, \$10 members, \$20 nonmembers.

American Bamboo Society Conference - Date: October 21-22; Time: 9:00 am to 6:00 pm; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. The American Bamboo Society's 2005 National Conference, being held at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, begins with a pre-conference tour Thursday, October 20. The Friday and Saturday seminars, which require advance registration, are open to Society members only; however, a plant auction and vendor booths are open to the public. Registration for the seminars can be made in person at Mercer's main office, or online at www.hcp4.net/mercer.

Randy Lemmon's GardenLine - Date: October 22; Time: 8:00 am to noon; Location: The Vintage Rosery 16630 Highway 36 (across from the Needville High School); Phone: 979-793-2888. The program will be broadcasting live from The Vintage Rosery. Bring your gardening questions, plant samples or photographs for Randy to give advice.

Fall 2005 Advanced Design Workshop - Date: October 22, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm; October 23, 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm. Location: Extension Annex Building (next to the Fort Bend County Agricultural Center at 1402 Band Road). The Vintage Rosery is co-sponsoring with the Fort Bend Master Gardeners. Instructor: Lucy Harrell, T.C.N.P. Noted speaker and co-author of "Ladies of the Garden", Lucy Harrell has become an underground organic guru. Lucy has been involved in gardening most of her life. Professionally, she has worked as a landscape designer, organic consultant and lecturer as well as teaching landscape design at Dallas area universities. Cost: \$85 per person (\$100 per couple sharing materials). This includes Lucy's 175 page workbook and graphing supplies. Reservations: First come, first serve. This class will fill up quickly. Class size is limited at Lucy's request, to allow for individual attention to specific problems and challenges. You can email to reserve a spot. That will hold your reservation for 48 hours. A check made out to Fort Bend Master Gardeners will confirm your seat. Drop it off at the Extension Annex Building, The Vintage Rosery, or mail to: Margo McDowell, Fort Bend Master Gardeners, 1402 Band Road, Suite 100, Rosenberg, Tx 77471.

Description: This class teaches design, maintenance, Lucy's organic process and a wide knowledge of plant material and how to use it - including companion planting with ornamentals. Participants will learn how to do a garden design that is both beautiful and successful taking into account stated priorities. Lucy will be available for all follow-up questions via email as you start buying and laying out your garden.

Requirements: Participants will need to complete and return a Gardeners Profile Sheet prior to the class. This will help students prepare for the class. Additional information and items to have: pictures of the areas to be designed; determine what direction their house faces and along with a sun track (know how much sun or shade an

area gets throughout the day); pictures of gardens containing ideas they would like their garden to look like (i.e. the look you are after.)

Topics:

*Intro to Design (Getting Ready to Get Started) * Slides on Trees, Ground Covers and Vines.

Micro Climates and Companion Planting Slides on Perennials, Annuals and Herbs.

*All About Roses (Best For Our Area - Best For Your Needs)*Pruning, growing and care of your roses. The importance of good drainage, watering systems and gutters. Slides on roses and drainage.

*Organic procedures, Composting and Planting Techniques*Adding structure to your design- Arbors, pathways, walls and garden whimsy. Slides on organic processes and garden structure.

Garden Tour-Container Gardening-Theme Gardens-Garden Rooms Slides on container gardening and theme gardening.

Pest and Disease: ID and Control Slides on insects and disease. Board work on problems in class. More design techniques to inspire you along the way.

How To Use Your New-Found Knowledge To Meet Your Needs & Expectations Hitting all the points- seasonal interest, companion planting, landscape uses and site requirements. Slides on seasonal bloom, more companion planting and review on structure.

*Garden Tour-Review-Best of the Best-Putting It All Together*Slides on the best of everything we've studied to help fill in the spaces.

Sell What You Grow at a Green Market - Date: October 24 or November 28; Time: 4:00 pm -6:00 pm; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Whether you work on a small inner city plot or a rural acreage, selling at local green markets is one of the easiest ways to get a big return for your labor. Customers are willing to pay higher retail for quality, and often appreciate making your produce a regular part of their diet. This class provides basic information on the techniques and strategies of market gardening. It includes: the different produce marketing options; how to design a garden for retail and wholesale crops; how to select vegetables for market, how to transport them, how to package them, and how to price them; how to please customers with enticing displays, proper set-up, quality products, and friendly communication; how to do product development, create name recognition, and produce value-added products while satisfying health department and other regulations and certifications. Pricing is explained, as are market rules. Ray Sher (November) is a market gardener at the Westbury Seeds Market Garden. Jim Bundscho (October) is the manager of the Bayou City Farmers' Market. Free for community gardeners, \$15 members, \$30 nonmembers

Mushroom Walk - Date: October 29; Time: 9:30 am to 11:30 am; Location: Mercer Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble; Phone: 281-443-8731. A slide show presentation introduces the study of mushrooms in the wild and the impact they have to the environment. Bring your favorite mushrooms field guide to mushrooms to use along the trails tour portion of the presentation. Teri McArthur of Texas Master Naturalists Heartwood Chapter and the Texas Mycological Society will lead the tour. Please call ahead for reservations.

Nature Ponds and Wetlands - Date: October 29; Time: 9:30 am - noon; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Our area usually gets sufficient annual rainfall, but it often falls in large amounts that make gardens unusable. Much of this water then enters the streets causing problems while at other times evaporation and lack of rainfall causes drought. There is a better way! Build a nature pond and wetland and end much of the flood/drought cycle. Ron Jones is a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Fisheries and Wildlife Service. He is a specialist in ponds and wetlands. Class is located in the South Main & Hillcroft area; directions will be e-mailed to registrants and may be picked up at the UH office. Free for community gardeners, \$10 members, \$25 nonmembers.

Forecasting Christmas Decorations - Date: October 29; Time: 11:00 am; Location: Martha's Bloomers, 8101 Highway 6 Navasota; Phone: 936-870-4111. With Tricia Barksdale.

Ecological Pest Management - Date: November 3; time: 6:15 pm - 8:15 pm; Location: Urban Harvest, in the MECA building at 1900 Kane; Phone: 713-880-5540 (Monday through Friday). Learn how to manage pest problems in your landscape and garden by enhancing and restoring landscape ecology. You will learn how to provide habitat to attract and sustain beneficial organisms. These destroy your pests. Specific plants, insects, habitat requirements and management techniques will be covered. Feel free to bring pictures or a baggy filled with your latest insect problems (leaves or insects). Ron Breland is owner of Organoscapes, a natural landscape and

maintenance company and has many years experience in organic insect control. Dr. Bob Randall is author of Year Round Vegetables, Fruits and Flowers for Metro-Houston. He specializes in vegetable and fruit gardening. Free for community gardeners, \$10 members, \$20 nonmembers.

18th Annual Fall Festival of Roses - Date: November 4,5,6; Location: Antique Rose Emporium, Independence Display Gardens, 10,000 Highway 50, Brenham; Contact: 979-836-5548. Over this three day weekend international, national and locally know speakers will present, free, to the public, a variety of garden related topics. Feed vendors will be on site but you are welcome to picnic on the grounds.

On the Herbal Side - Herbs for Disaster:

from DiAnna Munson

Living here in the Gulf Coast Area, preparing for hurricane season is a "End-of-Spring" ritual that is listed on the "Spring Cleaning - To Do List". This fact being stated, does your disaster preparedness routine include herbs? If not it should!

Garlic - Known as Russian Penicillin, it is the best antibiotic to have on hand when traditional medical care may not be available. Plus it tastes good and keeps vampires away.

Parsley - This herb is the small piece of green decoration that is left on the edge of the plate when you eat out. But, this tiny powerhouse contains all the known phyto-nutrients we need on a daily basis. Because of all the nutrients present in parsley, it is able to build and maintain the immune system, helping support all systems of the body to aid in healing and prevention of secondary infections.

Kelp - This herb comes from the oceans, therefore, fresh is not recommended due to its aroma. Dried though is most comforting to the nose and maintains the majority of its nutrients. It is high in iodine which will help with radiation poisoning if that might be a concern from a terror attack from a manmade source. Kelp also is high in phyto-nutrients making it valuable in maintaining a health system.

Elderberry - The reported uses include insect repellent. The dried powder is added to water and dabbed on the skin as a mosquito repellent. Mixed with sage, lemon juice, vinegar and honey, elderberry has eased sore throats, ear aches and upset stomachs. When added to peppermint and honey in a hot drink, it treats viral infections. Just the juice of the berries has been used to treat toothache, asthma, burns, cancers, chafing, gout, headache, neuralgia, psoriasis, syphilis, reduction of swelling, and wound healing. The leaves and flowers have shown to be effective against Salmonella typhi., and Shigella dysenteriae. One reported research group found it effective against syncytial virus.

Fenugreek - Reported research has shown that fenugreek treats constipation, dyspepsia, gastritis (both mean stomach aches). Applying it to the skin, it has been shown effective for ulcers, gout, wounds, and lymphadenitis. It has been researched as an antidiabetic agent and treatment for tuberculosis and cellulitis. The results from these research projects depend on the intent of the study, no precise conclusion can be made based on the bias of the researchers.

American Ginseng - This is the *Panax quinquefolius*. It is the root of the plant that is at least 6 years old. The difference between American and Korean or Asian Ginseng is in the preparation prior to selling. Korean Ginseng usually undergoes treatment such as drying or curing before it is sold. American Ginseng undergoes less manipulation and carries less distinction. American Ginseng has been shown to improve stamina, concentration, healing, stress-resistance, and improve the feeling of "well-being." Ginseng decreased fasting blood glucose and hemoglobin A in both diabetic and nondiabetic patients to the degree that some of the study participants were free of insulin therapy for the duration of the study.

Thyme - While thyme is thought of as a food spice, it is a very versatile in the medicine cabinet. It is used for antifatulent, antifungal, destroys parasitic intestinal worms, cough suppressant, antiseptic, antispasmodic, expectorant, and digestive aid. If you need proof this herb is effective, check your toothpastes, mouthwashes and ask your dentist about tooth fillings.

Cayenne Pepper - This is another herb, *Capsicum frutescens*, that shows up in the most unusual places, like topical creams for arthritis, ever hear of a treatment for arthritis called Capsicum? It has been shown effective for all types of stomach infections and disorders, including stress ulcers. Topical applications have shown effective as

antibacterial, antifungal, it eases muscle pain from strain or overuse and arthritis. It has also been shown effective in diabetic neuropathy and other types of neuropathic pain. In a small unpublished study, nasal inhalation of capsaicin was to be shown to relieve allergies and noninfectious perennial rhinitis. However, the study was ended without a trial because no one would agree to sniffing capsaicin. The study stated that there was "poor tolerability and poor participant adherence." Gee, I wonder why? The other aspect of this herb that I choose not to verify is that Cayenne Pepper is a good shark repellent. Although, people along the Gulf Coast do eat a lot of cayenne pepper and the only people I've heard of being attacked by sharks have been visitors.

Ginger - This herb has been known as the herb of choice for motion sickness and upset stomach. It is also an excellent therapy for microbial and parasitic infestations. It has shown promise as an anti-inflammatory for arthritis, and is very promising as a cancer treatment and as an antioxidant. An added value to ginger is it tastes great. The root can be grated on fruit and vegetable or made into a great tasting dessert. In the midst of a disaster, comfort food is as important for healing as lumber, or electricity.

Give it a Grow - Overwatering African Violets Can Be Murderous!:

from Suzanne Jerabeck

I'm guilty. But murder is the farthest thing from my mind every time I "save" those bruised and abused African violets from the grocery store SALE basket each Fall. But, they DO die...and not from too little care, but from giving them too much of a good thing!

They're pretty little houseplants (called *Saintpaulia ionantha*) that are low and compact and the perfect size for my kitchen window. If kept in good health, they bloom nearly non-stop. You can find African violets with single flowers and semi-double or double rows or petals in various shades of blue-violet to pink, fuschia, and white. Some of the newer cultivars also boast showy bi-colored flowers with contrasting borders. Very sweet...and very beautiful!

Good health, though, can be a challenge – especially if you keep the plant in that "pot within a pot" that store-bought varieties usually come in. I'm convinced that those pots are as lethal as bullets, especially when it comes to proper watering. While African violets require moist soil at all times, these pots will hold in any excess water that you've so lovingly delivered, causing root or crown rot. I warn you: these pots have killed many an African violet in my home. My advice is to trash the pot and replant in one of your own.

You can water from the top or bottom. But, one of the easiest ways to water your African violet is to place the pot in a watertight saucer or bowl that you add a little water to every few days. A better way is to use a wick that extends through the drainage hole into a saucer of water. Never let the pot touch the water – only the wick should. Either method helps ensure that the water moves from the saucer by diffusion through the hole in the bottom of the pot and into the soil ball. Wick watering also helps raise the humidity around the plant (a good thing – especially in our dry homes!).

To bloom, African violets need 10-14 hours of bright light and eight hours of darkness. In summer, put them in windows facing north or east. In winter, a sunnier, warmer window is better. You can even set your plants on a mirrored tile to reflect light. These plants thrive in temperatures of about 60 degrees at night and 80-85 degrees during the day. They adjust well to the dry air of our homes, but growth is stunted in cool temperatures. Temperatures over 85 degrees invite fungus and powdery mildew.

When it's time to repot in a year or less, use a mixture of two parts fertile loam, one part leaf mold or peat, and one part sand or perlite. This porous mix allows any surplus water to pass through easily but it doesn't contain a lot of nutrients. So, feed the plant a diluted fertilizer each time you water.

A few more tips: Stay away from terra cotta pots since they tend to collect harmful salts that will promote disease. Don't use water that has been through a softener (too salty!). Never allow the soil to completely dry out. Cut off spent blooms to promote flowering. And, never, NEVER spray the leaves with water. Water droplets on the leaves cause disfiguring spots or rings.

With bright light, proper watering, and regular feedings, your African violet will bloom all year long. Happy growing!

Fall Ideal for Planting Trees and Shrubs:

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

Finally, fall is here. The weather is becoming slightly cooler, and gardeners are slowly migrating back outdoors after record-breaking heat this summer. Now is a perfect time to add a new tree or a grouping of shrubs to the landscape. Or perhaps you have an area in the landscape that needs 'remodeling' or rejuvenating. The fall may be the best season to plant, surpassing even the spring.

Many people prefer January through March for planting, but the fall months of September through December have distinct advantages. Fall planting follows the heat of summer, before a cool winter season, and trees and shrubs planted in the fall use this to good advantage. Plant roots grow anytime the soil temperature is 40 degrees or higher, which may occur all winter in Texas. During the winter months, the root systems of the fall-planted specimens develop and become established. When spring arrives, this expanded root system can support and take advantage of the full surge of spring growth.

Fall is the optimum time to plant balled and burlapped trees and shrubs. Balled and burlapped plants have ample time to recover from transplanting and proliferate roots before spring growth begins. Remember, however, all bare root plants, including roses and pecan and fruit trees, should be planted in late winter when they are completely dormant.

When buying plants for your landscape, be sure to get healthy, well-grown plants. Always buy from a reputable dealer. Those in the plant-selling business year-round depend on repeat customers, and only by selling customers quality plants can there be assurance of future business. Beware of plant bargains. They can easily turn out to be real headaches. A bargain is no good if it dies. The price tag, especially the cheapest one, is not the best guide to quality.

All plants have growing requirements. Think about the plant's needs before you invest. Is it adapted to your area's soil? Will it grow in sun or shade? Does it need a wet or dry location? Is it cold hardy? Some nurseries have this type of information on tags beside the plant. If not, ask a nursery professional or the county Extension agent.

'Plan before you plant' is always a good rule of thumb. Whether you are planting a single plant or an entire landscape, plan first, then plant. Good planning is a worthwhile investment of time that will pay off in greater enjoyment of attractive and useful home grounds, and in increasing the value of your home. It's much easier to move plants on paper than to dig them after planting in the wrong place. A plan saves many planting mistakes.

Every plant in the landscape should serve a purpose. Ask yourself if you want a plant for screening, for privacy, or for shade. How large will it be five years from now? Plants, like people, grow up. Remember, that a small one-gallon-size plant will look entirely different after a few years of growth in your landscape.

Plant properly for success. Here are a few guidelines on getting the job done right:

- ! Dig a hole large enough in diameter so that the root system has at least six inches of clearance on all sides. The root ball should rest on a solid soil foundation, so don't dig the hole much deeper than the ball.
- ! Plant the tree or shrub slightly above the level of the surrounding soil, to allow for settling and increased soil drainage.
- ! Carefully place the tree or shrub in the hole. Handle the plant by the root ball, not by the trunk. A broken ball of earth can mean a dead plant. Always remove any container before you plant.
- ! Backfill the hole, using only the native soil removed from the hole; do not use soil amendments when planting large shrubs and trees. Fill the hole, and firm the soil around the plant. Water thoroughly to settle the soil around the roots and to eliminate any air pockets.
- ! Do not fertilize your tree or shrub after planting. Wait until early in the spring to do this, and even then, go lightly. Heavy applications of fertilizer may burn and injure the root system, and could possibly kill the plant.

! Watering has been and remains paramount in transplanting. At the time of transplanting, soak the root ball and surrounding soil. A thorough watering every 7 to 10 days dramatically increases the success ratio. More frequent watering may encourage root rot. Remember more trees and shrubs fail from over watering than from under watering.

! Before calling it a day, add 4 to 6 inches of mulch around the base of newly planted trees and shrubs. This helps to keep down weeds and conserve soil moisture. Use pine bark, compost, grass clippings, or leaves.

Fall is for planting. Visit your nursery today, and beautify and add value to your home.

Source: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/oct05/Fall.html>

Date: October 4, 2005

Use Leaves for Compost:

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

Autumn is here, and with it comes the yearly chore of keeping the lawn free of fallen leaves. They should be removed from the lawn, since a heavy blanket of leaves can smother a lawn if allowed to remain. In previous years, leaves were burned or hauled to the dump to be burned or buried. Air pollution controls have made the smell of burning leaves a thing of the past. Actually, leaves are much too valuable to burn. A better procedure is to compost them, to provide a ready source of composted soil for use in preparing flower and shrub borders, potted plants, and top-dressing for the yard. The simplest method of composting leaves or other vegetable matter is to build up alternate 4- to 6-inch layers of vegetable matter with 2 to 4 inches of good garden soil. Sprinkling a commercial fertilizer on each layer of vegetable matter will hasten decomposition. One-half pound or one cupful of 10-10-10, 10-6-4, 10-20-0, or the equivalent, per ten square feet of vegetable-matter layer is sufficient. Manure, if available and free of weeds, may also be added to good advantage to the soil layer. The compost pile should be 4 to 6 feet wide, and of any desired length. The top layer should consist of soil, and the surface of the pile should slope toward the center, forming a basin to hold water. The layers of leaves should be watered thoroughly as they are spread out, and when the pile is completed, additional water should be added periodically to keep the material moist but not soggy. The compost should be turned or mixed with a garden fork or shovel every three or four months, and within six months to a year, it should be ready for use.

Source: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/oct05/Compost.html>

Date: October 4, 2005

Garden Checklist:

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

- ✿ Fall is often one of the best times to enjoy rose blooms in Texas. Lightly prune hybrid teas, floribundas and modern garden roses and fertilize them in early fall for an abundant display until hard frost.
- ✿ October is a good time to reduce the insect and disease potential in next year's garden. Clean up the garden, removing all annuals that have completed their life cycle. Remove the tops of all herbaceous perennials that have finished flowering or as soon as frost has killed the leaves.
- ✿ October through November is also an excellent time to purchase bulbs while you still have a good selection in the garden center.
- ✿ Chill tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator until mid or late December before planting. The lower part of the refrigerator is best. Do not leave bulbs in airtight plastic bags during refrigerated storage.
- ✿ Plant bulbs in well prepared beds so the base of the bulb is at a depth that is three times the diameter of the bulb. In sandy soil, set slightly deeper and in clay soils less deeply.
- ✿ Holly plants with a heavy set of fruit often suffer a fertilizer deficiency. An application of complete fertilizer late this month can be helpful and provide a head start next spring.
- ✿ Start collecting leaves for the compost pile. Be sure to have extra soil available so that each 6 inch layer of leaves may be covered with several inches of soil. Always wet the layer of leaves thoroughly before adding

the soil. Add about one pound of a complete lawn or garden fertilizer to each layer of leaves to provide the necessary nitrogen for decomposition.

- ✿ In addition to bulbs, check your nursery or garden center for started plants of snapdragons, pinks, sweet williams, poppies, and calendulas. Planted now in south and east Texas, they will usually provide a riot of spring color; wait until late winter or early spring to plant in north Texas.
- ✿ Keep Christmas cactus in a sunny spot where night temperatures can be kept below 65 degrees F. Buds will drop if you allow night temperatures to go above 70 degrees F or if you allow the plant to become excessively dry. They should also be kept in total darkness from 5:00 pm until 8:00 am for about 30 days in October to initiate flower buds.
- ✿ If you have saved seeds of your favorite plants, allow them to become air dry, then place them in an airtight container and store in the refrigerator. Be sure to label each packet carefully. Remember, seed from hybrid plants will seldom resemble the parent plant. Prepare beds for planting pansies when they become available at the garden centers. They need a well-drained soil and exposure to at least a half-day of sun. It is best to use started plants, as seeds are difficult to handle.
- ✿ If you are planning to save caladium tubers for another year, dig them in late October, and allow to dry in a well ventilated but shady area. After 7 to 10 days remove leaves and dirt, then pack in dry peat moss, vermiculite or similar material for storage. Pack tubers so they do not touch each other. Dust with all-purpose fungicide as you pack. Place container in an area where temperature won't drop below 50 degrees F.

Source: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/oct05/GdCk10,5.html>
Date: October 4, 2005

Happy Birthday!

Happy October Birthday Wishes...

Pat Cayer - October 1

Evelyn Moon - October 22

Kermit Schlameus - October 22

Marti Graves - October 25

Happy November Birthday Wishes...

Randy Tucker - November 1

Laurel Brinson - November 4

Frances Mount - November 19

Shannon Foley - November 20

Viki Brushwood - November 20

Barbara Burkhardt - November 26

Roy Morgan - November 27

Pam Littlefield - November 29

Thanks - Anna Gawlik, Editor

Happy Gardening!!!

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