

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

Heather Vincent, Editor

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Little Known Facts...November's flower is the Chrysanthemum

Botanical Names: Dendranthema X Grandiflorum

Other Names: Daisy, mums, pompons, spider daisy, football mum

Description: Stems can contain multiple blooms or one flower.

Colors: purple, pink, white, yellow, magenta, red, bronze

Season: All year round

Meaning: Named by Carolus Linnaeus in the 17th Century. Cheerfulness, you're a wonderful friend, rest, loveliness, optimism, abundance, wealth. Red means love. Yellow means slighted love and white means truth.

Bloom Size: varies

Color Pattern: solid

Facts: There is a festival of happiness in Japan to celebrate this flower. In Europe, Chrysanthemum is a symbol of death and are used only for funerals or on graves. Flowers are used to make a sweet drink known as chrysanthemum tea. In Asia the tea is used for many medical uses such as and aid in recovery from influenza.

News...

News from Ted Jagen....

2007 dues are being collected. The dues remain \$13 with \$2 going toward our dues to the Texas Master Gardener Association and \$1 going toward insurance. Checks should be made payable to BCMGA. If paying by mail, please address the envelop to Ted Jagen 13805 CR 282 Alvin, Texas 77511.

Demonstration Garden 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!

Habitat for Humanity...

By Gary L. Gardner Sr.

Brazoria County Master Gardener Association landscape of Habitat For Humanity house no. 57 in Angleton, Texas. This house, located at 608 Magnolia was landscaped on Saturday, November 4, 2006. Since the committee chair, Gary Gardner was in Chicago, Il. the week preceding the landscape, Howard Pickle volunteered to coordinate the advance planning and be in charge. This house was a Dow Chemical Co. sponsored house, so the workers for the landscape were, in addition to the Master Gardeners, Dow employees, Habitat volunteers, the future home owners and the future home owner's friends and family. BCMGA members present were: Howard Pickle, Gary Gardner, Barbara Brown, James Smith and Roy Morgan. The role of the Master Gardeners at these landscapes is mostly instructional and guidance, however, we can't help getting our hands in the soil.

And a good time was had by all!

News and Notes From the Coordinator...

By Paula Craig

The new BCMGA officers for 2007 are:

President Barbara Brown

1st VP Ed Barrios

2nd VP Lee Withers

Secretary - Ann McLain

Treasurer - Ted Jagen

Delegates - Pam & David Peltier

Alternates - Roy Morgan and Debbie Soderman

The Organic Gardener...

By Ellen Pedisich

Hope

Every time I come to this garden I have hope that Mother Nature will continue her cycle of life. I pay homage to her when I put my hands in the soil and plant seeds. The rains come, the sun gives off its energy, and the seedlings grow. I anticipate a bountiful harvest that I can share with others. Sometimes the pests come. They make me go to others for answers to my problems. Then I try again and trust that the next time Mother Nature will reward me with a crop. This is the prayer of the gardener.

Haiku

The warm sun shines down.
The mustard seed emerges.
Mother Nature rules.

Berries, Citrus, Figs, Fruit & Fun...Saturday February 17, 2007

By Gil Livanec

The BCMGA will host the first sale devoted to plain old fashioned good eating. Brazoria County friendly plants have been selected to peel and eat, wash and eat, cook and eat or just kick back and eat.

Blackberries : Brison is a large berry and the earliest ripening of the TAMU berries which is adapted to a wide area of our state. Rosborough is also a large berry and has become the most popular of the TAMU releases with wide adaptation. Quachita is large berry and the newest thornless variety. The sweet fruit ripens in mid July and holds up well after harvest. Vines are vigorous.

Citrus: Four different grapefruits will be offered. Red meat varieties will include Ruby Red (a standard for Texans) and Rio Red, a sweeter offspring of Ruby. Bloomsweet and Golden are the most popular and good growing white meat selections.
The Improved Meyer lemon is a must for those of us who crave the 'made

from scratch' – finger lickin' good –home made pie. The Meyer lemon and the Improved Meyer are not true lemons but a cross between an orange and a lemon

The Mexican Lime (also called Key Lime by Florida folks) has become THE citrus especially as fish and seafood gain cooking and nutrition acclaim. Mexican lime bloom periodically throughout the year so a fresh year round supply is the norm.

Two varieties of sweet (C.sinesis) orange will grab your attention. Republic of Texas, which was discovered(1847)in the Angleton area, indicate hardiness as low as 19 F. It is quite yummy. The ever popular Naval (a Navel variety) is a long standing favorite for the sweet tooth folks.

The Satsuma family will have Owari and Brown Select. Both do very well in our county and grandchildren can peel them, unassisted !

Figs : BCMGA was successful in obtaining a limited supply of LSU Purple. To compliment this offering we have the jam up Celeste and rich preserves of Texas Everbearing.

Grapes : Flame, a red seedless grape, will join Himrod, white seedless, for your attention. Large clusters on eating quality photogenic vineyard guys.

Kumquat (Fortunela) : Sweet flavor,skin and all. Hardy to 17 F or more

Peaches: For all you folks who missed out on Tropic Snow, freestone white flesh, at the MGA shows last year, come early, and buy Earligrande as a yellow flesh companion. Respectively 200 & 275 chill hours make these May ripened beauties right on for Brazoria County.

Ann's Corner...

By Ann McLain

I have always liked autumn. It has always seemed to me like a whole new beginning, and my spirits perk up. This was true even before we moved to the heat and humidity of a Gulf Coast summer. Now, after a brutal summer, it really seems like a new start. Some folks prefer spring, seeing that as the natural beginning of the year. I'm with those other cultures that choose to celebrate the new year in the fall.

I have been thinking about this because, since the cooler weather has arrived, I have been doing what most of us have been doing – clearing away the debris of summer and getting things in order for winter. Doesn't that feel like a new beginning, wiping the slate clean?

Of course, what results isn't quite the clean slate that gardeners in northern climates achieve. Stuff down here just keeps on keeping on, year round, so there is quite a bit of that slate that doesn't get wiped off. And, north or south, nothing quite clears my slate of that Mr. Lincoln rose in the wrong place. Why did I put it there, with no excuse either aesthetic or practical? Why didn't I see how silly it was going to look?

I always feel better when I can wipe out a season's failures and get on. And, down here in Brazoria County, I get to do that several times a year! Isn't that wonderful?

The miseries of this summer-into-fall have been memorable, at least to me. There was the problem with the tomatoes, or should I say problems. The spring planting was wiped out by the neighbor's fallow deer when they escaped their pen. The fall planting went to disease, hornworms, and an incredible army of stinkbugs. Why so many buggy enemies? Last year's mild winter, some say; or the funny weather this summer (has there ever been a year that didn't have funny weather?)

Insect visitors also did in my green beans, this time the cute little caterpillars of the long-tailed skipper butterfly. Cute or not, they got squished, once I finally caught on to what was going on; although I have to admit this was mostly vengeance, since it was too late to save the crop. And then there was the case of the rose bushes choked off by a loop of soaker hose when my husband caught the supply hose under the lawnmower. Don't ask – it wasn't pretty.

I could go on, with the plants that didn't grow and the ones that grew too much, but I should focus on the good bits. Somehow, in gardening, there are always good bits. The evergreen wisteria and the Fortuniana rose have fattened up nicely this year, and the pergola is beginning to look like we knew what we were doing. Lots of plants are beginning to look wonderful, and all these new beds (well, most of them) are going to be terrific, and much sooner than I had expected.

Every morning lately, as I step out the front door with the dogs, my eye falls on a brilliant salmon gerbera in its clay pot. I can't take any credit for this wonder, since I bought the thing in bloom. And if past performance is any indication of future success, it's likely that this gerbera will have a short life. But for now, a glimpse of those gorgeous flowers just makes me grin, and all's right with the world. Just as it should be at the beginning of the year.

Plant of the Month...Brazilian Red Cloak (*Megaskepasma erythrochlamys*)

By Barbara Brown



Many times we see a plant or flower that catches the eye and we say "Oh how pretty". Now, how often do we say "OH WOW". That was my impression when I first saw a flower stalk or a bract of the *Megaskepasma erythrochlamys*, better known as Brazilian Red Cloak.

A dear departed Master Gardener brought the bract to one of our meetings a few years ago to be identified; It was love at first sight. Two years later, from a single cutting, I have this marvelous plant. It is 8' tall with foot long magenta bracts and white to pink tubular flowers. The flowers are short lived, but the showy bracts seem to last forever. The leaves, with heavy veining, are at least a foot long and 6 to 8 inches wide.

This semi-evergreen shrub is originally from Venezuela. It does beautifully in our zone 9B and is a late summer-early fall

bloomer. Grow it in average, well drained soil, part sun, with regular moisture during summer and you will be rewarded with this magnificent specimen.

Fall is a perfect time to propagate by tip cuttings or by root suckers. Take a few cuttings and pass along to a friend. You will be thought of each time your friend passes by this plant, just as I am reminded of my dear friend Ted Cooper.

Thymely and Sage Advice...Contributed by Lee Withers

By Angelica Bergomot

Herbs rule! Whether you call it an “erb” or an “herb”, everyone needs to learn to use herbs more often. Even if you don’t really cook, adding fresh herbs to salads, canned or fresh vegetables, or even your TV dinners adds a flavor sensation and many medicinal benefits.

Each month I will highlight a different herb with loads of trivia to help you grow it, use it, or just to impress you friends and family with your knowledge.

Petroselinum crispum or Parsley is high in antioxidants and vitamins A, B, and C. It is also rich in iron and a cartload of micronutrients. In addition to the health benefits, this is renowned for its ability to freshen breath. When used with garlic it keeps garlic from “biting” you back the next morning. Parsley’s flavor leans itself to be used in a multitude of dishes as it acts as a culinary liaison, cleansing the palate, which allows the tastes to come through cleanly, and blends everything quite well. Try it with potatoes, or add it to butter or margarine for an herbal bread taste.

This evergreen-like plant was cultivated throughout history. Grown from antiquity to present, parsley was a seasoning in many Mediterranean cultures. Originating in Italy and Sardinia, some of the earliest known uses came from the Romans, who crowned their victorious athletes with garlands of parsley. In biblical times, the Israelites during their slavery in Egypt ate bitter herbs during the night of last plague, which became the Passover. This tradition continues today to present day Yom Kippur. Parsley was considered one of the bitter herbs.

One of my favorite uses of parsley come from the same general region, Greece. The Greeks make a traditional dish called Tabuleh made mostly of parsley and some bulgur wheat. (See the recipe at the end of the article) This is a refreshing summer salad treat or side dish.

As a young budding herbalist, I first tossed parsley in a green salad. My parents were trying to lose weight and this was well before low-carb, low fat, or sugar free commercial dressings were available. I chopped about ¼ of a bunch or measured about 2 tablespoons dried and squeezed the juice of a lemon with a dash of onion powder and Voila! a virtually no calorie dressing.

If you want to delve deeper into parsley’s uses, it has many medicinal ones. Its roots and leaves are prepared in various ways to treat coughs, jaundice, menstrual problems,

rheumatism, and kidney stones. The juice from the leaves can soothe conjunctivitis, and eye inflammations. Pregnant women and people that suffer from kidney inflammation should avoid large amounts of parsley. Never try to create your own medicinal concoction without consulting a reliable herbalist or a speciality book on the subject.

There are three main varieties of parsley. Most gourmet cooks tend to prefer the flavor of the flat leaf, Italian variety (*P. neapolitanum*) which is called plain parsley. The curly French type (*P. crispum*) and its hybrid triple curled are mostly used for garnishes (I cook with this type, too). The third type, Hamburg, is more popular in Europe and is grown for its large root. Hamburg is usually stored and eaten as a root vegetable.

This indispensable herb can easily be planted in the fall (even though it is available in the spring, also). Flat or curled with both grow in our area but during the heat of the summer the curly type will die back and usually most of it will return. Both varieties will perform better in the cooler months but the flat leaf will make it through the summer especially if it gets a bit of rest from the afternoon sun. I have had the flat leaf in a washtub for several years. Apparently, it has reseeded.

The curled French type even though a bit more temperamental should still be planted. One of favorite ways to use this variety in my garden is as a border of a flowerbed. Madeline Hill states, "A bed of cabbage or pansies bordered by parsley is a thing of beauty."

You can plant these herbs directly into our clay but they will be happier and so will you if a bit of sand and compost are added to break up the heavy clay. Other popular planting are containers and window boxes usually mixed with other essential kitchen herbs (Basil, oregano, and thyme).

Parsley is a biennial but down around the Gulf Coast you might as well consider it an annual. I replant it every year so that it survives for two years one crop is going to seed while the younger crop is still producing well. Parsley has a horrendous reputation for how difficult it is to start from seeds. The secret is to soak the seeds for a few hours in warm water or to place a few seeds in individual ice cube trays and freeze with water. After the cubes are frozen, they can be popped out and placed in the soil.

When choosing seedling, especially herbs, I tend to look for a crowded pot. I love to get more for my money. Find a pot that has several seedlings, pop it out of the container and gently shake off the dirt. I gently tease the seedlings away from each other. If the pot is root bound I will hose off as much dirt and possible and yank them apart. If it is that root bound you might lose a couple seedling but you usually rewarded with extra plants.

Besides the problem with our heat, there is really only one insect problem to contend with when planting parsley. Swallowtail butterflies lay their eggs on parsley as a larval food source. This has never really bothered me, as I tend to plant extra for all of our needs. It also makes me happier knowing I am providing a nursery for a beautiful creature. If the caterpillars bother, you just pick them off and place them on dill, or

fennel. If you are in a nasty mood, and mad at a local nursery you could take the caterpillars to them and place the bugs on their parsley.

If you only thought parsley was something just for color on your plate at a restaurant, please reconsider. Eat it after your meal, use one of the easy recipes that follow, or toss it in your salad. Your body and your friends will love you for it. Its light flavor enhances nearly every dish and this versatile highly beneficial herb should be used daily.

2006 Calendar of Events:

Nov 14: BCMGA Meeting

Dec 12: BCMGA Meeting

Thanks to Roy Morgan, Ellen Pedisich, Kirby Rapstein and Christine Kern for November meeting refreshments. Remember, next month we all bring a covered dish for our annual Christmas party. The meat of choice is sliced BBQ beef from Joe's in Alvin so think of side dishes that will be good with BBQ.

Anyone wanting to participate in our gift exchange should bring a generic gardening gift in the \$10-\$15 range

Education opportunity for MGs and MNs. Mrs. Consilio, 4th grade teacher at Jane Law Elementary in Freeport is looking for a program on habitat/wildlife gardens. There are 4 one-hour classes. The program should be hands on. If you would like to get involved, please let me know. The program would be next January or February. Contact Paula Craig County Agent, Horticulture Texas Cooperative Extension 979-864-1558

NEWS AND NOTES:

NEED: Don just got word from Shannon that she can't do the "Tropical Paradise" class for Brazosport College on Feb 28. Is anyone willing to make this presentation. It will involve putting together a presentation as well as conduction the class. Don is willing to help in putting together a PowerPoint presentation if need be.

ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE:

Thank you to all who helped with our Open House, and to those who turned out. This event, the third of the year, was held Saturday, October 21. Despite some iffy weather conditions, it was quite successful. Lots of area gardeners came out to learn about propagation, dividing various bulbs and roots, planting roses, and other topics. Best of all, they went home with some free plants, and we thinned out our borders for winter.

If you are interested in providing this kind of educational opportunity for area gardeners (such as open houses, seminars, speaker's bureau, etc.) - consider joining our committee. We will be having a planning meeting in the next few weeks; let me know if you would like to get involved (Ann McLain, amclain@annsgarden.com, 979-798-2284).

Happy November Birthday Wishes

Laurel Brinson Nov. 4th
Barbara Burkhardt Nov. 26th
Shannon Foley Nov. 20th
Pam Littlefield Nov. 29th
Roy Morgan Nov. 27th
Frances Mount Nov. 19th
Randy Tucker Nov. 1st

The Brazoria County Master Gardener Association shall not be affiliated with any commercial enterprise for the profit of an individual member or group of members. No member shall use their position with the Association to further the manufacture, distribution, promotion or sale of any material, product or service in which they have either a direct or indirect financial interest.



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