

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

Heather Vincent, Editor

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Little Known Facts....

November's flower is the Narcissus

Botanical Names: Narcissus poeticus actaea

Other Names: Narcissi

Description: Small multi-petaled blossom, similar to the daffodil.

Colors: white, pink, yellow, orange

Season: Fall to Spring

Meaning: Comes from the Greek word Narcissus meaning numbness. Self-esteem and vanity.

Bloom Size: 12 to 18 inches in height

Color Pattern: solid, bi-color

Facts: Flowers are extremely fragrant. Parts of plant are poisonous if ingested. All daffodils are narcissi but not all narcissi are daffodils. Galanthine, a substance in the flowers is currently being used in medicine to treat Alzheimers.

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 envelope to Ted Jagen 13805 CR 282 Alvin, Texas 77511.

News from the Demonstration Gardens...

By Ray Michalik

The county has been cutting more ditches around the master gardener designated area and putting the soil in the vegetable spot. We now have ditches cut on the North and South side of the veggie garden. They have done a very nice job. In time they will cut another ditch on the east side and all that soil will be put in the vegetable garden. What has been dumped there earlier and the additional soil has been graded flat with somewhat of a crown on it and hopefully the rain water will run off. The bed has been raised approx. one foot in my estimation. If they would cut us at least two ditches in the garden spot which would leave us with three wide beds it would be great. We can talk to them at a later date about this.

We are still getting community help but not as often or as many as we have in the past due to the cold weather and the holidays things should pick up in Jan. if the weather doesn't get to nasty.

We nearly have the two center strips between the trial rose beds fully mulched over. It's coming along but slow. We'll need to order more ground cover to install around the perimeter before we put mulch there. I think we have enough on hand to complete this.

Henry has planted some onions and garlic and they are coming along fine.

Billy Heck's (MG) brother, Jim, has made us a very nice bench and donated it to the Master Gardeners to put anywhere we see fit. It's made out of cedar and it is a beautiful piece of furniture. I'd say better than you would purchase from any store. Every one needs to stop by and look at this. I put my order in first for one, of course he just grinned at me. If he wasn't playing so much golf I think he'd have time to join the MG Association. He also put new slats on one of our other benches we have. We all need to thank him for what has made for us, as its outstanding work.

If you don't have anything to do on Tue. or Fri. morning come on out and pull a weed or two. The coffee pot is usually on and bring a friend.

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!

News and Notes From the Coordinator...

By Paula Craig

Happy Holidays to everyone. As we launch into a new year, I think we will see many positive changes in the BCMGA. In January, Rich Tillman will introduce specialist John Smith who will offer advanced training in rainwater harvesting. A set of guidelines will be developed for the Education Station gardens. Monica Kransevic has a great Master Gardener training class organized. The new interns will complete an educational project with the help of certified MGs. Our first open house is set for February 3 and will feature rose pruning and plant propagation. I want to thank everyone who works so hard to make this a top notch organization. Wishing you all a blessed New Year.

Dr. Bill Welch wishes to announce the latest in the Landscape Design Study Courses: Number IV, Series XX - February 19-20, 2007.

The courses are held in College Station, TX., and are co-sponsored by Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. and Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M University. They have been attended by many Master Gardeners in the past. It is an opportunity for more in-depth training in landscape design than we normally include in the Master Gardener curriculum. Each course has been approved to qualify for 12 hours of continuing education toward maintaining certification for Master Gardeners. Further information may be found at [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/landscape design courses](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/landscape%20design%20courses).

This is the fourth course in a four-part series, although participants can begin with any of the four. The program is nationally accredited by the National Council of State Garden Clubs and offered at approximately six month intervals here in the Bryan-College Station area. An evaluation of public and private landscapes is a popular part of this particular course. Each of the courses offers an "outside" lecture. We are pleased to have Dr. Wayne Mackay for this presentation, who will speak on "Water Efficient Plants."

We are pleased to offer "scholarships" for Course IV to County Extension Agents with horticulture and/or Master Gardener responsibilities. This amounts to the course paying the registration fee for qualified individuals. We hope that this will be useful as professional improvement for you as we all strive to improve our educational programs. Please fill out and return the registration form as soon as possible.

Feel free to contact my office should you have questions. Thanks for spreading the word about this program to your Master Gardeners and others who may be interested.

The Organic Gardener...

By Ellen Pedisich

Jesse helped the Junior Master Gardeners plant garlic in pots. Henry has a wide bed of onions growing, and Mike has bamboo, bluebonnets, day lilies, and amaryllis in his garden. Just think how good they will all be in a few months.

These past weeks I have been collecting bagged leaves, making plans, and watching the new rose cuttings grow. To make compost I need a lot of leaves and so I go out walking in my neighborhood before the sun rises and I look for bagged leaves. After I walk for an hour I go home and get my truck. Sometimes I need to take three trips because I have a small truck. Then I take them to the education center where I will make compost in the wire cages.

I am always thinking of following the guidelines from A & M for growing vegetables. This plot has four sections. That's just right for a four year rotation for the spring garden and the fall garden. One section will rest while I plant in the other three. You see that I need to keep records. I have hopes for a good year.

I look over at the rose propagating area and see the new growth on the plants. Some day they will give a gardener flowers throughout the year. They are low maintenance roses, too.

Haiku

Take a rose cutting,
Bury three nodes in clay soil,
Water, wait for spring.

Citrus Sale...

By Gil Livanec

CITRUS SALES COMMITTEE

Gil Livanec, Chairman

Heather Vincent, Co- Chair

Barbara Buryere, Co-Chair

I. Publicity Coordinator -- Suzanne Jerabeck

Newspapers, Radio, Houston Chronicle Garden section, UrbanHarvest(Houston)
Extension Offices: Harris Co (Bear Creek & NASA), Ft.Bend, Galveston

II. Nursery Delivery Coordinator -- Barbara Buryere

Pre sales Delivery—Coordinate with Jessie & Ray
Pre sales plant preparation

III. Printing Coordinators -- Heather Vincent/ Lee Withers

Carbon Price List selection/costing/distribution to sales team
Plant Description brochure development & printing
Color pictures of sale items & Flyers

IV. Set Up Team (Take Down) – Jessie Knight / Ray Michalik

B.B. Brown, Barbara Ross
Donie Stowers & Carole Wenny

V. Sales Team Coordinator – Ted Jagen

Ann McLain, Jeannette Shane & Patty Varnado

VI. Plant Advisors Coordinator – Gil Livanec

Citrus - Gil Livanec, Smitty, Ray , John Alcorn

Figs - Kirby Rapstein

Peaches - Gary Gardner

Blackberries – Roy Morgan

Grapes - David Peltier

Kumquat – Pam Peltier

VIII. Customer Assistance Coordinator – Carol Farmer

John Alcorn

Ed Barrios

Ann McLain

Donie Stowers

Holiday Poinsettias

Paul Ecke Ranch, Encinitas, CA

The Paul Ecke Ranch offers tips on caring for poinsettias - the traditional red, white or green flowering plants synonymous with the Christmas holiday season.

Location and Temperature - The poinsettia thrives on indirect, natural daylight. Exposure to at least six hours daily is recommended. If direct sun cannot be avoided, diffuse with a light shade or sheer curtain. To prolong the bright color of the poinsettia bracts, daytime temperatures should not exceed 70F. Avoid placing the plants near drafts, excess heat or the dry air from appliances, fireplaces or ventilating ducts.

Water and Fertilizer - Poinsettias require moderately moist soil. Water the plants thoroughly when the soil surface feels dry to the touch. Remove the plant from decorative pots or covers, and water enough to completely saturate the soil. Do not allow the poinsettia to sit in any standing water; root rot could result which could kill the plant. It is not necessary to fertilize the poinsettia when it is in bloom.

Outside Placement - Since poinsettias are sensitive to cold weather, frost and rain, outside placement during the winter months should be avoided. However, in mild climates, an enclosed patio or entryway may be suitable provided the night temperatures do not drop below 55° F. Make certain the delicate bracts are well-protected from wind and cold rain.



Snowcap' poinsettia

After the Holidays - When the bracts age and lose their aesthetic appeal, usually by late March or early April, cut the poinsettia back to about 8 inches in height. By the end of May you should see vigorous new growth. Pruning may be required during the summer to keep plants bushy and compact, but do not prune after September 1. Keep the plants in indirect sun and water regularly.

Place your plants outdoors - where they can bask in the warmth of spring and summer - after outside night temperatures average 55F or above. Continue regular watering during the growth period. Fertilize every 2 to 3 weeks throughout the spring, summer and fall months with a well-balanced, complete fertilizer. Around June 1, you may transplant your poinsettias into larger pots. Select pots no more than 4 inches larger than the original inner pot. A soil mix with a considerable amount of organic matter, such as peat moss or leaf mold, is highly recommended. If you wish, you may transplant the poinsettias into a well-prepared garden bed. Be sure the planting bed is rich in organic matter and has good drainage.

Re-flowering - The poinsettia is a photoperiodic plant, meaning that it sets bud and produces flowers as the Autumn nights lengthen. The plants will naturally come into full bloom during November or December, depending upon the flowering response time of the individual cultivar. Timing the bloom to coincide closely with the Christmas holiday can be difficult without the controlled environment of a greenhouse. Stray light of any kind, such as from outside street lights or household lamps, could delay or entirely halt the re-flowering process. Starting October 1, the plants must be kept in complete darkness for 14 continuous hours each night.

Accomplish this by moving the plants to a totally dark room, or by covering them with a large box overnight. During October, November and early December, the plants require 6 - 8 hours of bright sunlight daily, with nighttime temperatures between 60 - 70F.

Temperatures outside this range may delay flowering. Continue the normal watering and fertilizer program. Following this regime for 8 to 10 weeks should result in a colorful display of blooms for the holiday season.

Garden Checklist for November-December, 2006



by Dr. William C. Welch, Landscape Horticulturist

Now that there are fewer garden chores, take time to browse gardening catalogs or search the Internet for those hard-to-find favorites. Place orders for seeds this month so you will have them available when you are ready to plant. By ordering early, you will be more certain of getting the varieties you want. In addition to ordering seeds that you are already familiar with, try a few new kinds each year to broaden your garden contents.

The woody portions of shrubs and perennials may be left in place until further in the season. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.

Reduce the fertilization of indoor plants from late October to mid-March. An exception would be plants in an atrium or a well lighted window.

Take care to examine house plants on a weekly basis to discover pests such as aphids before they have multiplied extensively. Control these pests with a stream of spray outside, rub them off with your fingers or a swab dipped in rubbing alcohol or soapy solution.

Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.

Drain and store garden hoses and watering equipment in a readily accessible location. The lawn and plants may need water during a prolonged dry spell.

November through February is a good time to plant trees and shrubs. In the Panhandle, planting is often delayed until February or early March.

Continue to set out cool-season bedding plants, such as pansies, violas, stock, snapdragons, and dianthus.

Prepare beds and individual holes for rose planting in January and February. Use composted manure, pine bark, and similar materials mixed with existing soil.

Use good pruning practices when selecting Christmas greenery from landscape plants. Don't destroy the natural form and beauty of the plant.

Protect your lawn from excessive winter damage by providing irrigation during dry periods.

Plant spring-flowering bulbs if you haven't already done so. Be sure to refrigerate tulips and hyacinths for 6-8 weeks prior to planting.

Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Don't over water. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and opening doorways. Fertilizer is seldom needed the first few months.

Take advantage of good weather to prepare garden beds for spring planting. Work in any needed organic matter, and have beds ready to plant when needed.

Don't forget tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator. They can be planted any time in December if they have received 60 or more days of chilling.

Want to start cuttings of your favorite Christmas cactus? As soon as it has finished blooming, select a cutting with 4 or 5 joints, break or cut it off, and insert the basal end into a pot of moderately moist soil. Place it on a windowsill or other brightly lit area. The cuttings should be rooted within 3 to 4 weeks.

Don't spare the pruning shears when transplanting bare-rooted woody plants. Cut the tops back at least one-third to one-half, to compensate for the roots lost when digging the plant.

Berrying plants, such as holly and yaupon, may be pruned now while they can be enjoyed as cut material inside the house.

Ann's Corner...

By Ann McLain

CUT IT BACK?

Our Education Station, aka the demonstration garden, is a good place to hang around - you'll be sure to pick up all sorts of information that you'll never find in any book. These passing comments are especially useful for those of us whose years of gardening experience were spent in a different garden dialect, so to speak.

In all those years that I gardened in the north, I never was much for cleaning up the garden in the fall. Many things had not yet quite finished when the first snow fell. And many others might have quit early enough to be cut back, but their seed heads made useful food (and sometimes nest material) for the garden birds. Most dry tops actually looked rather attractive when heavily frosted with snow, and in Wisconsin, once the snow came, we usually were not without it for any length of time until spring.

But here in Brazoria County, I have realized that the charm of dried tops is considerably less so, without the snow decoration. Especially when some of the adjacent plants are still green, or even still blooming. Time to cut it off, I might think.

The word from our colleagues at the gardens these past few weeks is this: don't do it. Barbara Ross and Barbara Brown have been quick to caution anyone seen wandering around with a pair of clippers and a speculative air. If plants have been bitten by our recent frosts, the worst thing you can do just now is to cut that damage off. Why? Cutting back into live wood is likely to stimulate the plant to start sending out replacement shoots – tender shoots that will be especially susceptible to the next freeze.

Of course, some plants just seem to be determined to live dangerously. My Confederate rose, which I finally set out into the ground in early autumn, lost its leaves after the freeze. I did nothing, as advised, but today I noticed that it has new growth popping out all along its stems, just asking to be killed in the next frost. (If it doesn't drown first, of course – we've had about 7 inches in the past two weeks.)

On the other hand, there are some plants that can be cut back now. The responsible gardeners among us probably did this awhile back, but it's OK to do it now and it's not too late. These are the plants that shoot up with un-branched, soft (not woody) growth from the base. They won't be damaged because any new shoots they put up will be next to the soil, where they will pause until warm weather beckons. This category includes the gingers and cannas.

Gardeners who know will tell us that we should have cut the gingers off as each stalk stopped blooming, but I have trouble cutting off something that is still photosynthesizing. But if you didn't remove the spent stalks then, you certainly can do it now that they've turned brown. Cannas carry on until they get nipped – I had some pretty cherry red flowers right up until that December freeze – but there won't be anything more now until warm weather returns. So cut them down. Carole Wenny has observed that she has less trouble with leaf rollers when the

canna foliage is not there through the cold months, so that's incentive to get out and cut them down, if you haven't already.

This is also a good time to take a good look at our gardens to see what might make them better. This year I am wrestling with the tropical look, and right now I can see the drawbacks. Barbara Ross said the other day that she hates to look at her tropical beds at this time of year. My little tropical area at home is nothing compared to the glorious tropical beds at the Education Station, but still I have noticed that it loses some of its glamour just now. OK, most of its glamour. My tropical area is laid out to be an enclosed room seen from our bedroom. By late summer, it felt quite enclosed with tropical foliage. But now, with the gingers and cannas blasted, the elephant ears dissolving onto the ground, the various hibiscuses brown to the base – the walls have gone. So I need to spend some time reading, and looking at other tropical plantings, to figure out something that will maintain the enclosure year around. Before we know it, it will be spring again, and we won't have time to contemplate. It will be time to plant the spring garden, and time to work on the Spring Plant Sale, in no time at all.

**Happy December
Birthday Wishes**
Barbara Bruyere Dec. 19th
Christine Kern Dec. 17th
Tom Nolan Dec. 7th
Kirby Rapstein Dec. 31st
Sherry Summers Dec. 20th
Sandra Taylor Dec. 21st

2006 Calendar of Events:

NEWS AND NOTES:

•We are losing a Master Gardener....

It is with mixed feelings that I am resigning from both the Master Gardener and the Master Naturalist programs. We have sold our house and will be moving on December 29, 2006. We will be traveling for a few months and will then locate to our "dream" in Asotin, Washington.

I have enjoyed my time with both organizations and have learned so much from everyone involved.

Regards, Barbara Greeley

How to Start a Community or School Garden Class 1: Getting Started (Gary Edmondson)	Mon Dec 11, Feb 12	4:00-6:30pm
How to Start a Community or School Garden Class 1: Getting Started (Dr. Bob Randall)	Mon Dec 18, Jan 15, Mar 19	1:00-3:45pm
How to Start a Community or School Garden Class 2: Design (Gary Edmondson)	Wed Jan 17 Wed Feb 14	2:00-4:00pm 4:15-6:15pm
How to Start a Community or School Garden Class 3: Implementation (Gary Edmondson)	Mon Dec 4 Wed Jan 24 Wed Feb 22	4:00-6:30pm 2:00-4:30pm 4:15-6:45pm

Sell What You Grow at a Farmers' Market	Mon Jan 22, Feb 26	4:00-6:00pm
Successful Fruit Varieties for the Houston Area	Wed Jan 10	7:00-9:00pm
Growing Organic Vegetables	10 Thu Jan-May	6:15-8:45pm

Backyard Orchard 1: CITRUS TASTING and Growing Citrus	Sat Dec 2	9:30am-12:30pm
Backyard Orchard 2: Care of Fruit Trees	Thu Jan 4	6:15pm-8:45pm
Backyard Orchard 3: Hands-On Fruit Tree Pruning	Fri Jan 5,12,19, 26, Feb 2,9	4-6pm
Backyard Orchard 4: Peaches, Plums, Pomegranates & Other Fruit	Sat Jan 6	9:30-noon
Backyard Orchard 5: Apples, Pears & Persimmons	Sat Jan 27	9:30am-noon
Backyard Orchard 6: Berries, Figs and Grapes	Sat Feb 3	9:30am-12:30pm

Introduction to Permaculture	Thu Jan 16	7-10pm
The Ecological Foundations of Design	7 Tue Jan-Mar	7-9:30pm

Growing Great Tomatoes

Tue Jan 30

6:15-
8:15pm

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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