

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

Heather Vincent, Editor

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Little Known Facts....

January's flower is the Carnation

.Botanical Names: Dianthus Caryophyllus

Other Names: Carn, Chinese Pink

Description: A delicate multi-petaled single flower atop a long stem.

Colors: pink, white, red, yellow, orange, green

Season: All year round

Meaning: Fascination, admiration, pure love, my heart yearns for you, a mother's love.

Bloom Size: 18 to 24 inches in height

Color Pattern: solid, striped, bi-color, frosted

Facts: Carnations symbolize many things. Pink carnations are said to have first appeared on Earth when a tear fell from the Virgin Mary's eye when Jesus Christ was carrying the cross. According to Christian legend, the flower was said to have sprung up from the Earth when her tear hit the ground, therefore the pink carnation represents a Mother's undying love.

News...

News from the President...

Well I survived my first meeting as the president. Friends tell me it didn't show, but I was so nervous I could not stand still. Friends! None of you reminded me to use parliamentary procedure. I'll probably be impeached before the next meeting.

To those of you who missed the meeting, I'll tell you that I stressed that we go back to the reason we were formed in the beginning. Our "job" is to assist TCE and our Horticulture Agent

in educating the public on good gardening technique.

This is the reason more of you must become involved in the work going on at the Education Station. This spring we will, weather permitting, start a veg table garden testing program.

Please come out and join us in this endeavor.

In closing, when I stand in front of that podium and mess up, CALL ME ON IT! I've dished out enough criticism over the years, and I can take it.

Happy Gardening, Barbara Ross

January General Meeting Summary...

The meeting was preceded by a program presented by John W. Smith from TAMU. He talked about **harvesting rainwater**. In our county we may feel that we have a surplus of water; but even here, collecting the rain that falls on our hard surfaces can save, not just water, but the energy otherwise required to move water around. Further information about the topic can be found at rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu and at Texaswater.tamu.edu.

The general meeting was called to order by President Barbara Ross. Minutes from December were read by Ann McLain. In addition to the treasurer's report, Ted Jagen provided a summary of our financial activity in 2006. Although our income was exceeded by our expenditures, we are entering 2007 in **good financial health**.

Twenty seven members have not yet paid their **dues**. If this includes you, please act soon - we need to finalize the membership list by the end of February.

Any decision about adding the ability to accept credit cards at our sales is on hold, waiting for information about the cost of bringing a phone line to the headhouse.

Barbara Brown reported that our **propagation efforts** for the Spring Plant Sale are coming along well. Although it is very wet to be working outdoors just now, when members do get back into their gardens, they are asked to keep the plant sale in mind, and bring in surplus material.

Upcoming events:

The **outreach event at Clute** on Feb 3 is from 8-noon, at the community center, which is adjacent to the police station. We will have three presenters, but Barbara Brown invites other members to attend, to help answer questions.

The **Open House** at the Education Station will be from 10-noon on Feb 10. We particularly invite non-gardeners who wonder how to manage their plants, but all are invited to attend. We will be focusing on rose pruning and spring propagation, and we hope to have citrus tasting (and information) as well.

The **Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale** is scheduled for 8-noon on Feb 17. We will be offering a variety of oranges, grapefruits, figs, peaches, blackberries, etc.

The **Chili Cook-Off**, a competition between Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, will be held February 23. More details later.

Volunteer Training Coordinator Monica Krancevic reported that the upcoming **training class schedule** has been set. The schedule will appear on the website, and members are encouraged to volunteer as hosts, and to bring snacks. There will be some good speakers that you won't want to miss. To volunteer to host and/or bring food, contact Donie Stowers, Hospitality Coordinator.

State director Pam Peltier says the state organization website has information for the **state conference**, which will be held April 12-14 in Kerrville.

Roy Morgan reported that our new **plant labels** have been installed. We will be ordering more labels from time to time, as we change and add plant material; if members would like to order some of these grea-looking labels for our own gardens, we can piggy back our orders onto those for the organization. The cost is currently \$3.05 per label.

There was some discussion of the **vegetable garden project**. Barbara Ross reminded us that our real job as Master Gardeners is to assist the county agent in assessing horticultural practices and distributing information. Therefore, all of our garden spaces at the Education Station need to be trial gardens. We need to do things in a consistent manner and keep records, so that we can properly evaluate the plant materials and methods. Our big project at present is to get the new vegetable space organized.

Barbara Ross announced our new **guidelines for volunteers at the Education Station**. This document formalizes our procedures, and who is responsible for each element, so that all volunteers understand our policies.

It was announced that "**business**" **cards** can be provided for volunteers that need them for outreach events (these are not to be used for any sort of business). Those interested can order them through Ted for \$3.00 per 50.

Hope to see you all next month.

On Saturday, Feb. 17, at 10 a.m., the University of Houston Entrances & Perimeter Committee will host Dr. Bill Barrick of Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile , Alabama , a site famous as the epitome of Southern charm and graciousness. There is so much we can learn from him about making our own gardens as genteel, as wonderfully “Southern” as their gardens are.

The Houston Camellia Society, Houston Orchid Society and Greater Houston Amaryllis Society will have exhibits and are among many who have donated exciting door prizes.

The lecture is free, but you do need to order tickets. The phone number to reserve tickets is UH OnCall at 713.743.2255. You can order up to 4 tickets.

News from the Time keeper...

By Don Gerard

In an effort to obtain more uniformity in the reporting of Volunteer hours (and save myself some headaches) I'd like to present the following.

Brief Instructions for Reporting Volunteer Hours.

1. When reporting telephone hours, report travel to and from the Extension Office under “Other” and time spent at the Extension Office under “Hot Line”.
2. When reporting any other time where you travel to and from the site report ALL hours under the heading for the activity – DO NOT SEPARATE TRAVEL TIME! (i.e. – If you go to the Education Station to prepare plants for the plant sale and leave your house at 6:30 am, work till noon and arrive home at 12:30 pm then you would report 6 hour under the heading of “Plant Sale”. If, instead of preparing plants for the sale you cut grass or some other job not related to the plant sale, that would be entered under “Education Station” – or “greenhose” for those with the old time sheets.
3. When reporting time for the monthly meeting, include travel time. If we have a speaker, you would enter one hour (no matter how long the program really is) under “Advanced Training”. Travel time and the remainder of the total time of the meeting would go under “BCMGA meeting”. (Except for the December meeting which is a PARTY which receives no credit.
4. When reporting training classes which cover several days, report total travel time plus time spent in classes under “Advanced training”. Do not report total time eating, sleeping, dancing, etc. (If you discuss the class material at dinner, then that time is reportable. If you dream about the class material, use your own judgment.) ☺
5. When reporting presentation hours, report all time spent preparing materials for the presentation as well as the hours spent making the presentation (and travel to and from the presentation site) under the appropriate heading (i.e. – “Seminar Speaker” or “MG Course Assistant”).
6. The above does not cover all reporting, but should clarify most of the items where reporting varies considerably.

7. Thanks for your support!

News and Notes From the Coordinator...

By Paula Craig

TMGA State Coordinator Doug Welsh has requested county MG reports. Please turn in your hours for 2006 to Don Gerard asap. If you have hours for speaking engagements, please also get me a breakdown of the number of programs you conducted, number of hours spent presenting and number of individuals served. If the same person attended more than one event, count them more than once. The numbers are used when TCE's leaders go to the legislature to ask for budget monies. The current value of one hour of volunteer time is \$18.05. Please get your hours in so we can show our local and state officials one measure of what we're worth. Thanks, Paula

Master Gardener Specialist - Entomology training will include experts speaking on insect identification, insect diversity, insect pest management, pesticide safety, insects in the garden and landscape, butterfly gardening, digital photography for insect identification, biting and stinging insects, collecting methods and shipping techniques. Participants have the option of making or improving their own collection during the course. Most of the course will be conducted at the Dallas Research and Extension Center, 17360 Coit Road , Dallas, TX 75252

Habitat for Humanity...

By Gary Gardner, Sr.

The landscaping for Habitat House No. 58 at 74 Fern Court in Lake Jackson, which was originally scheduled for this Saturday, 1-27-2007, has been postponed. I checked with Mike Heather at the site this morning and the house is surrounded by a sea of sloppy mud and they are still trying to dry in the house under plastic sheets in the rain. They have miserable working conditions. This house looks like a carbon copy of the one we did last year on Fern Court, so I thought I would just send the same list to David Shackelford for landscaping plants and we can do the same plan. In the past week or so, there was some confusion about who was going to do the landscaping. Mike Heather sent me an email stating that Tod Sebesta, who owns Marji's Landscaping in Lake Jackson is a member of Brazos Point Church, whose members will be doing the landscaping labor, and he had volunteered to draw up a bed plan and furnish the plants. I went by his business with a copy of Mike's email to determine if indeed he was going to do it. He wasn't in so I left the email with his dad with a note for Tod to call me. He never did, but I finally caught up with him at his business yesterday and he told me that no he wasn't planning to do it since he found out that BCMGA did it. He already knew this by the way, so I don't know what the confusion was. He did say he would donate and plant a red maple tree. I assume the landscaping will be on a Saturday in the future, since the church members have school and day jobs during the week days.

The Organic Gardener...

By Ellen Pedisich

Soon I will begin the process of changing those leaves into black gold. Since I find this decomposition process fascinating I am reading once again "Don't Bag It – Compost It", by Texas A & M. What takes place in a compost pile is amazing. Bacteria are already on these leaves and when I give them water, air, and a source of nitrogen, they will multiply and hasten the decomposition process that Mother Nature will do without any input from me. "Bacteria are single-celled organisms and can be shaped like a sphere, rod, or a spiral twist. They are so small that it would take 25,000 bacteria laid end to end to take up one inch on a ruler, and an amount of garden soil the size of a pea may contain up to a billion bacteria." Imagine all this life in the compost pile and in our soil.

Last week I spread our black gold on the garden plot where I want to plant some sunflowers. This year I will use Burpee's Dwarf Sunflower seeds.

Haiku

Oh dwarf sunflower
with your bright yellow petals
bring butterflies here.

Plant of the Month...

By Donie Stowers

The Periwinkle

The Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) is an old fashioned plant that is so easy to grow. It is available in white, pale pink, lavender, purple, burgundy and red. It usually grows 12"-18" tall and wide and blooms from spring to frost. It likes full sun to part shade, attracts butterflies and readily reseeds. It makes a great border plant with each plant appearing to be a big beautiful bouquet. As Felder Rushing would say, "This is a great pass along plant for neighbors, friends and family!"



Ann's Corner...

By Ann McLain

PLANT SWAP

Your fellow Master Gardeners are looking for either looking for plants or wanting to find good homes for some. The rules are simple: contact me (Ann McLain, amclain@annsgarden.com) and I will put you in touch with the person who has it or wants it.

Wanted: Do you have some of that purpley maroon summer garden phlox that Dr. Welch often mentions? Someone would like to help you thin it out.

Available: Someone has a lot of surplus ginger, of several different types. These are not named varieties, but they will grow and bloom and make any space tropical. Give them a good home.

Contact Ann McLain (amclain@annsgarden.com) to list your haves and wants in next month's news letter.

SEED TIME

Ann McLain

Have you placed your seed orders yet?

The beauty of our Gulf Coast climate is that there is almost always something we can be sowing, somewhere. I think that's great, although a gardening friend I knew in Wisconsin would hate it. He worked like a beaver in his garden from the time the ground thawed in April until about July 4. By then his garden was as good as it was going to get that year, and he was ready to take the rest of the year off. He always said he was glad to let things go downhill from there.

But even with our lack of real winter, there is a seasonality about seed buying and sowing. The winter holidays approach, the catalogs pour in. And I go into planning mode, with lists and diagrams and catalogs and reference books in piles all over the house. Gotta have this, gotta try that! Get 'em ordered, quick! In fact, I've already received my first order of new seeds, although I have also already discovered a few things I didn't order and should have. I'm way ahead of the game, as well as ahead of the time I really should be starting most of these things.

For most of my gardening past, I have tended to overestimate the amount of space and time I have available for starting seeds. When I had 10 linear feet of grow-lights available, I usually discovered a need to have at least 15 linear feet of trays of little plastic six-packs full of seedlings. Now that I live where at least some of those exciting new selections can be started outside, our household should feel some relief. But really, it just increases the numbers of tiny little plants that need to be carefully watered, and it opens the door to a whole bunch of new hazards bent on devouring my treasures before I ever see them reach the transplant stage.

Long ago, when I was a beginning gardener, I learned a lot from my obsessive reading of the Parks' and Burpee's seed catalogs. I never was able to limit myself to the necessary, the sensible, or even the possible. In those days, Parks used to list a lot of exotic seeds, or maybe they just seemed exotic to a

gardener in the chilly north. I ordered (and grew) seeds for fairy primroses, brilliant orange crossandras, teensy sinnigias, tropical trees, and many other delights. Of course, I also ordered, and failed to grow, many other things, but I've long since forgotten those.

Those days of exotic offerings in mass market catalogs are mostly gone, but still, every year I find things I can't resist – new All America Selections, for instance. And seeds for vegetables I've never tried – and probably won't eat, if truth be told - but aren't those ridged zucchini nifty looking? And seeds for things that I've always bought at the garden center, like pentas and lisianthus. Things which would be a lot easier to buy – but wouldn't it be great to grow them myself?

So, just in case you're not already a sucker for seed catalogs, I'd like to make a suggestion here. Go ahead and order the stuff you need – the tomato seeds, the cucumbers, and so on. Then, even if you have a bunch of saved seed from last year's zinnias, or cockscomb, or whatever you grew last year, try something that's new to you. Try Red Spider Zinnias. Or an Easter Egg Plant. Or the flashy new amaranthus called Dreadlocks, with its bright fuchsia flowers. What are the chances they'll do well here? It's not a sure thing, of course, especially with annuals that might turn out to be cool weather subjects for us. But there are things to learn, things to try. And, if it works, think how truly cool it will be to have grown something completely different, from seed, by yourself.

Happy January Birthday Wishes

Don Gerard Jan 4

Barbara Greeley Jan 14

Ellen Pedisich Jan 14

E.J. Rosser Jan 24

Judy Wood Jan 31

2007 Calendar of Events:

Feb 10th from 8 am to noon Open House at the Education Station.
There will be Rose pruning, plant propagation, and citrus grafting & tasting

Saturday, Feb. 17, at 10 a.m., the University of Houston Entrances & Perimeter Committee will host Dr. Bill Barrick of Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile, Alabama, a site famous as the epitome of Southern charm and graciousness. There is so much we can learn from him about making our own gardens as genteel, as wonderfully "Southern" as their gardens are.

The Houston Camellia Society, Houston Orchid Society and Greater Houston Amaryllis Society will have exhibits and are among many who have

February 19, 6:00 to 10:00 pm Brazosport College Landscaping on the Go. Monday and Wednesday evenings through April 11

February 23rd The chili cook-off between the Master Gardeners and the Master Naturalists is on Friday, February 23rd. It will be held at the Education Station. You may enter as an individual or you may get a team together. I need to have a list of people entering by the 10th of February. Please call me at 979-849-6664 or E-mail me at barb8668@sbcglobal.net.

March 6, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm Master Gardner Training Tuesdays Donie Stowers 281.997.6186 & Thursdays through April 5

April 21st from 8 am to 2 pm Plant Sale at the Education Station

NEWS AND NOTES:

Thanks to Bebe Brown, Barbara Bruyere, Beverly Straughan, Ann Carpenter and John Rosser for their great refreshments at the January meeting.

We will be serving a covered dish lunch the first day of the new training class on March 6 so as many as possible please bring your best dish. As always, we request those of us attending any of the training classes bring a snack for either the morning or afternoon session.

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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