

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

Heather Vincent, Editor

February 2007

Vol. 16, Iss. 17



Little Known Facts....

February's flower is the African Violet

Botanical Names: Saintpaulia

Other Names: African Violet

Description: A five petaled velvety blossom.

Colors: purple, pink, white

Season: All year round

Meaning: Named for Baron Walter Von Saint Paul Illaire who discovered the plant in Tanzania in 1892. Modesty, faithfulness, virtue.

Bloom Size: unknown

Color Pattern: solid

Facts: One of the most popular flowering houseplants.

News...

NOTES FROM THE PREZ...

Well, I survived another meeting. So far I haven't heard about any plots to have me impeached or worse. I simply can't be formal and serious in front of that podium. And if I try, then I get more nervous. So you have me as I am, or tell me different and I'll step down.

February has been unusually busy. On Saturday, the 3rd, we had the half day seminar at Clute. On Saturday, the 10th, we had the pruning and grafting seminar at the Education Station. Then, the big one, the Fruit Tree Sale, on the 17th. I don't know the final numbers on the sale, but it must have been a success, we were out of pretty much everything in a little over an hour.

Many thanks to Gil Livanec and Barbara Bruyere, who were chairmen for this sale. Also thanks to all the Master Gardeners who helped with this event, from making folders, to publicity, to just standing in the cold wind talking to our visitors, we couldn't have done it without you. I'd like to add a special thank you to Sandra Smith, we owe you a lunch.

Now we'll all get busy planting things for the April 21st Plant Sale.

Stay warm,

Barbara Ross

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING...

Our business meeting was brief, so that we could hear details about all the fruit varieties we will be selling on Saturday, February 17. Minutes and Treasurer's Report were accepted as given. Treasurer Ted Jagen assured us that we are right on track for this year.

The Open House on February 10 was a great success, with over 50 visitors, despite the cold weather. Next open house will be in late May or early June.

Guidelines for activity at the Education Station were distributed. This is a formalized statement of how we need to operate there. It includes names and contact information for the working committees that keep our activities going.

New forms for reporting volunteer hours were also available for those who needed them. Don Gerard asked the membership to check phone and email information on the roster, and make corrections where necessary. A number of addresses seem to be wrong. If you were not present, and you believe your information is wrong, please contact Don.

We do not expect any left over plants from the Fruit Tree Sale, so there will not be any for the membership to buy. Gil Livanec announced that he will provide a list of choices at the March meeting; if we get our orders to him by the April meeting, he will add plants for individuals to the order for next year's sale. These would be delivered next winter. (Suppliers are sold out for this year.)

The Chili Cook-Off is off again, perhaps to be rescheduled later. Donie thanked all the people who brought a fine spread of food for the meeting. The meeting was adjourned.

Following the business meeting, Gil Livanec gave us a presentation on the varieties we will be offering on Saturday.

News from the Demonstration Gardens...

By Ray Michalik

What a wonderful day we had today with the citrus plant sale. Only a few words about it as our chairman will elaborate more on I'm sure. Have you ever attended a semi controlled stampede? What a site it was today. I also encourage everyone who is interested in helping with our annual citrus plant sale to attend either the Galveston or Fort Bend County citrus plant sale next year. There is something to be learned from them.

There still hasn't been a lot going on at the Green House due to the uncooperative weather but things should pick shortly.

We have the heater problem resolved in the Green House, thanks to Monica's eyes and Billy's help. The problem was with the pilot light kept blowing out as the orifice was partially plugged and when the furnace came on the fan would blow the pilot light out. Monica has great eye sight and was able to see the blockage for my "tired" eyes and the blockage was cleared.

I can't say a bad thing about our John Deere lawnmower as after it sat all winter long without starting it, I decided to mow the lawn prior to the open house and would you believe it started nearly before I engaged the start switch. Last year I had many choice words for it as nearly each time I tried to start it, it would take it's sweet time starting and on it's terms and that's not the way these mechanical beasts are supposed to work. Hopefully the problem is solved.

Jessie has planted many tomato seeds which have come up and will need transplanting soon. Come on warm weather we need you to dry out our veggie planting area.

We have our phone installed in the learning station and in working order. Phone number is 979-549-9903 if you should ever need to contact some there on our work days. Also a used stove was bought and donated, by one of our master gardeners, for our use at the green house. Thank you. It has been put to use several time on our Friday work day. The soup's have been great on those cold days.

If you're looking for something to do an Tue. or Fri. mornings come out and have a cup of coffee and maybe a bowl of whatever some puts together and maybe pull a weed or two.

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

Whizzz-Bang! It was over with that fast. The Fruit Sale, held February 17th was a resounding success, with all available stock sold out within minutes. It is clear from the 2007 response that the outlook for 2008, is very rosy (or lemony), and we should not lose momentum getting the best possible selection ready for next year. The planning, coordinating, executing and publicity efforts were beautifully choreographed. Even the credit card machine worked! (Thanks, Ted) Congratulations to all who made it happen.

The pre-spring Master Gardener Open House also had record attendance.

In spite of the miserable cold drizzle, over 50 residents showed up to learn about pruning, propagation and citrus grafting. The next Open House will be held in May or June at the Farmer's Market. If you have a topic you would like covered, and someone to do it, please let Ann McLain or myself know.

Master Gardener spring training begins March 6, 2007. If you would like to help with hospitality, please contact Donie Stowers at dstowers1@houston.rr.com.

Trial Gardens:

EarthKind

The EarthKind Rose trial garden is about ready for spring. We need rosarians to prune and weed before ratings begin. We will train volunteers March on how to take ratings sometime in March, and we will begin rating April 1. Workdays: each Tuesday and Friday in March, please come out and lend a hand.

Fertilizers:

Jesse Knight is conducting a comparative analysis of organic and chemical fertilizers. Three mixes will be tested using recommended application rates from a Texas A&M soil analysis. Fertilizers include: N - cottonseed meal, cornmeal gluten and ammonium sulfate (non-organic), K - Kmag and muriate of potash. P levels were above the critical level and will not be applied.

Tomatoes:

Jesse and Ellen Pedisich will also assist me in conducting tomato trials. Seedlings are up and will be ready to plant in a few weeks. If you would like to assist with ratings and/or maintenance of these gardens, please contact me at 979-864-1558 or p-craig@tamu.edu.

Outlook for Spring Weather:

The National Weather Service is predicting higher than average temperatures and just average precipitation for March and April.

Average temperature for March is 73°F and 79°F for April. Precipitation averages 3.3 and 3.6 inches per month for March and April, respectively.

Let's hope this is true so that we can get our trial gardens going!

The Organic Gardener...

By Ellen Pedisich

I went to the Gardening Seminar in Clute on Feb. 3, 2007 to give a presentation on composting. As I prepared for it I wondered if anyone would pay attention to me since I don't have pretty flowers to show. Was I surprised! The people in the hall that morning were very responsive; they smiled, asked questions, and readily came outside with me to participate in my demonstration. And then they helped me clean up and gave me a Keep Clute Beautiful t-shirt.

Thank you Ed, Roy, Erwin, and David for helping me clean up the compost site. I could not have done it by myself. I also thank you, William, for giving me this wonderful book entitled Secrets to Great Soil. Already it is like a new friend. I treasure it.

I will soon be planting potatoes.

In your compost pile
plant one potato and wait...
flowers, potatoes.

Habitat For Humanity...

By Gary Gardner, Sr.

The Master Gardeners had to decline participation in landscaping for Habitat For Humanity house No. 58. Weather delayed the date for landscaping until it fell on the date of our citrus sale, Feb. 17. The site will be too muddy, but Habitat decided to go ahead with the landscaping on 2-17-2006 anyway and just "stick the plant in the ground" at a later date. It remains to be seen if they can even get sod out of the grass farm due to the wet weather.

The Inquiring Gardner...

By Ann McLain

Have you had a good look at your citrus plants lately? If your place is like mine, getting any kind of up close and personal look at the plant residents has not been easy. I did manage to wade out to check on my teensy baby kumquat the other day.

First, this poor thing was a victim of the old eyes-bigger-than-garden syndrome. I bought it several years ago, on sale, only to realize I had no place to put it. It joined the pot patrol on my driveway. Then, I set it out into a new raised bed at precisely the wrong time (mid-summer). So I was a bit anxious about how it might have fared in this nasty winter.

Well, the short answer is that the kumquat seems to have handled our cold spells just fine. But closer inspection revealed some pretty ugly looking leaves. Some were distorted, others looked wrinkled. In some cases, the leaf looked as though there had been a blister

separating the top and bottom layers. What's with that, I wondered. So, I asked Paula. The answer was this: now the mistreated kumquat is afflicted with leaf miners.

Various insects, including some moths and some flies, produce tiny larvae that live inside the leaf, and are called leaf miners. Some insects, living in some plants, produce light colored tunnels meandering across the leaf. But the miners that work on citrus apparently hunker down in one spot and literally eat the stuffing out of the leaf. Hence the blistered, peeling, scaly appearance.

The bad news is that it is difficult to kill leaf miners. Only the adults are outside the leaf and thus exposed to pesticides. This means that if we want to get rid of leaf miners, we need to know when the adults are present. The various oil sprays that commercial growers use do help keep leaf miners down.

The good news is, it doesn't matter all that much. It turns out that leaf miners on citrus don't have much effect on production. Paula says that the best approach for those of us with only a few small trees is to "Be a good scout". Search the trees regularly for funny leaves, and simply remove them. Don't just throw them on the ground, though – there are live critters in there, waiting to continue their life cycle and bring more funny leaves to your tree. Wrap and dispose of the leaves you pick off, or burn them. Then you might get ahead of the cause of those misshapen leaves.

Plant of the Month...The Coral Honeysuckle

By Donie Stowers

Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) Coral Honeysuckle is one of the first plants to bloom in my yard in the Spring. It is a hardy, twining vine that is deciduous, in my yard, and it blooms on new growth. As it grows 15'-25' tall each season, mine gets a good haircut in the fall. It is growing on an 8' wide by 4' tall section of cattle panel that is attached to two 8"x8"x8' landscape timbers that have been planted in the back of a flower bed. It's gorgeous clusters of small red trumpet shaped blooms attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. It likes moist, well draining soil but is drought tolerant once established. In the Spring, it is a hardy, twining vine that is deciduous and blooms on new growth. As it grows 15'-25' tall each season, mine gets a good haircut in the fall. It is growing on an 8' wide by 4' tall section of cattle panel that is attached to two 8"x8"x8' landscape timbers that have been planted in the back of a flower bed. It's gorgeous clusters of small red trumpet shaped blooms attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. It likes moist, well draining soil but is drought tolerant once established.



2007Calendar of Events:

March 6 Master Gardner Training classes

9:00 – 12:00 Welcome & Introduction

12:30 – 3:30 Ecology for Gardeners

March 8

9-12 Integrated Pest Management

12:30-3:30 Basic Botany

March 13

9-12 Soils

12:30 – 3:30 Vegetables

March 15

9-12 Woody Ornamentals/Trees

12:30 – 3:30 Fruits and Nuts

March 20

9 – 12 Give Turf a Chance

12:30 – 3:30 Perennials/Annals

March 22

9 – 12 At Caldwell Nursery

12:30 – 2 At Vintage Rosery – Old Garden Roses

2 – 3:30 Water Gardens

March 27

9 – 12 Plant Pathology

12:30 – 3:30 Insects

March 29

9 – 12 Weeds

12:30 – 3:30 Landscape Design

April 3

9-12 Plant Propagation

12:30 – 1:45 Herbs

2-3:30 Tropicals

April 5

9-9:30 Junior Master Gardners

9:30 – 10:30 Composting

10:30 – 12 Native/Invasive/Adaption

12:30 – 2:30 Project Presentation

April 21 Plant Sale

NEWS AND NOTES:

Master Gardner training begins March 6th – please sign up to host refreshments or to bring a covered dish.

The 2007 National JMG Specialist Training will take place on April 24-25 at Texas A&M University. Its a great opportunity for those county staff or volunteers who are wanting to grow JMG programs and youth gardening at the county level. As before, the training is set up as an intensive 2-day conference and is specifically designed for those coordinating or supporting JMG programs at the county and regional level. More details and registration info is at:

<http://www.jmgkids.us/index.k2?did=10198&ionID=10198> Space is limited and registration will be open until the cap of 40 attendees is reached.

Registration has just opened so pass on to anyone that you think would be interested. Thank you for your support of the Junior Master Gardener program and your efforts to GROW GOOD KIDS in your community!

Thanks to Carol Farmer, Pam Peltier, Candace Novak, Donie Stowers and Beverly Straugham for refreshments at the February meeting. At this time there are 2 people signed up to bring refreshments in March, Kirby Rapstein and Debbie Soderman. We need at least 2 more people to help with the refreshments. If you can, please let me know: dstowers1@houston.rr.com .

The first meeting of the Master Gardeners Training Program is Tuesday, March 6. We plan to serve a covered dish luncheon on that day so all help is appreciated. Also, anyone attending any of the Training Program sessions are asked to bring a snack, either for the morning session or the afternoon session. The trainees will be bringing their own lunch after the first session but I am sure the will enjoy some snacks.

Carol Farmer's brother passed away Tuesday, February 20 in Houston. Our thoughts are with her at this sad time.

Solving the Mystery of Pruning Roses

**Dr. Doug Welsh, Landscape Horticulturist,
Texas A&M University**

February is the month when most modern roses need to be pruned. Even if your roses have already begun growth, the time has come to prune. Annual heavy pruning is essential to insure the prolific bloom and long-life of a rose bush.

Explaining the concept of rose pruning without a live bush to demonstrate on is difficult, so let your mind loose to help visualize the following steps in rose pruning:

Pruning of roses is actually done year round. Every time you cut off old blooms and remove twiggy growth, you are actually promoting new growth. There are two times a year when you prune more seriously, spring and fall.



Jacqueline du Pre

You will need the following items: a good pair of hand pruners (preferably the scissor type, not anvil type), a sharp keyhole saw and large loppers, a heavy pair of leather gloves, a pruning compound and a dull knife.

The first step in spring pruning of Hybrid Teas, Grandifloras, Floribundas and Climbing roses is to remove any canes that are dead or just old and non-productive. These canes are usually gray in color and scaly.

This pruning will encourage future "basal" breaks which are the life blood of any rose bush. Basal breaks refer to new shoots, soon to be producing canes, which arise from the graft union. These should not be confused with "suckers" which arise from the rootstock below the graft union. Remove all suckers.

The next step involves taking a good look at the bud union. If you have any old, dry, scaly wood on the union, remove it. Use the dull knife to scrape the bud union to remove the scaly wood. By doing this it will again make it possible for new basal breaks to come about.

Beginning to fine tune the pruning, remove all twiggy growth on the remaining canes (note: the fine tune pruning on climbing roses should be done after they bloom in the spring).

Try to clean out the middle of the bush as much as possible. This allows for good air circulation to prevent insects and disease.

Now you are ready to prune on the good healthy canes. If your roses have already flushed growth, it is important to prune each cane back to a dormant bud. A bud that has already begun growth and is then pruned will simply continue to grow vigorously and bloom very little. A dormant, non-growing bud will initiate growth after pruning and will produce an abundance of blooms.

One comment used to describe pruning is to "prune to an outside bud." This means when picking the point on a given cane to cut back to, make sure there is a good bud on the cane facing toward the outside of the plant. This will insure the growth of the new bud is to the outside, therefore keeping the center of the rose bush clear and open for air circulation.

Another guideline in pruning back an individual cane is to cut the cane at the point when the diameter of the cane is the size of a pencil or slightly larger. This is normally at a height of 18 to 14 inches. If there is the need to prune back to a dormant bud, the size of the cane may be larger and the cane length may be shorter.

If old and large canes have been removed to the bud union, it is a good practice to seal these large cuts. This helps prevent insects and diseases from infecting the cuts. Smaller canes usually don't need to be sealed. Use some sort of sealing compound such as orange shellac or even Elmer's glue.

When pruning is completed, remove any old foliage left on the canes and rake up and remove any leaves or twigs. This will help reduce the disease and insect pressure on the young, tender shoots and buds.

The final product of your pruning should be a rose bush about 18 to 24 inches tall with 4 to 8 canes. Add some fertilizer, water and tender-loving-care, and that pitiful looking rose bush will soon give you a shower of flowers.

Q. What about pruning miniature roses? When and how?

A. Miniatures should be pruned now, too. As for how to prune, use the same guidelines given for the larger type roses except do it in miniature. The end product will be a rose bush about 4 to 6 inches tall with 4 to 6 canes.

If you don't have any miniature roses, plant some this spring. You will be surprised at the wealth of blooms such a small plant can produce.

Use the miniatures in groups of threes, fives, or sevens to make a real splash. The miniatures also work well as a border plant along the front of a shrub bed. And finally, try some miniatures in clay pots and decorative containers to add color to decks, patios and apartment balconies.

Camellias for Texas Gardens

**Dr. William C. Welch, Landscape Horticulturist
Texas A&M University**

Like so many of the South's cherished ornamental plants, camellias originated in China and came to North America via Europe. The genus *Camellia* includes many species, but of these, three are of special importance and interest as Southern plants: *Camellia sinensis*, *Camellia japonica*, and *Camellia sasanqua*.



Tea Plant (*Camellia sinensis*)

Of these three, the one that evoked the most intense interest in the early days of the Southern colonies was *Camellia sinensis*, a shrub that, truth be told, is of no special ornamental value. It is a reasonably attractive evergreen plant that bears single, cream-colored flowers. The blossoms were of no concern to colonial planters. What they were interested in was the plant's foliage, which when dried and processed may be brewed into the popular beverage, tea. This was an ancient taste in China and Japan, and the cultivation of the tea plant had been carried on in those landscapes since ancient times. Tea-drinking became the fashion in England in the late sixteenth century or early in the

seventeenth century, but because the leaves had to be shipped in from China, for a long time tea remained an expensive luxury.

Because of the interest in tea consumption the British took an early interest in establishing domestic tea production in the American South. The famous Trust Garden in Savannah was the first to receive seeds of tea. This occurred in 1744. Those first seeds did not grow but plants were sent in 1772 to Georgia and recorded as growing on Skidaway Island near Savannah before 1805. By 1813 a serious effort to grow tea was underway at Charleston, South Carolina. That planting did not flourish there either nor did they prosper in Texas-there is a record by the Cat Springs Agricultural Society of unsuccessful attempts at tea culture by early German settlers. Cat Springs is located near Bellville, Texas.

A successful commercial planting of tea was finally established by the Lipton Tea Company near Charleston where it is still in production although under a private label and no longer owned by Liptons. Like all camellias, *Camellia sinensis* requires an acid, well-drained, moist soil.

The tea bush has a more beautiful relative, one which did take root in the American South, and that is *Camellia japonica*. This species is best known to Southern gardeners for its handsome foliage and elegant winter and early spring flowers. A native of Korea, China, and Japan, this camellia has flower colors that range from white to turkey red, with many variegated forms. Although well-adapted to much of the south, *C. japonica* has a reputation for being difficult to grow when exposed to less than its ideal conditions. It is, however, by far the most important species of the three in relation to our Southern gardening heritage, and specimens of *Camellia japonica* mark the site of many important plantations and old homesteads throughout the South. *C. japonica*'s less popular rival in the Southern garden is *Camellia sasanqua*, a shrub of Japanese origin. Individual blossoms of Sasanqua camellias, though beautiful, are much less spectacular than those of *C. japonica*. Nevertheless, sasanquas fill an important garden niche because it is fall blooming-*C. Japonica* cultivars (known as "japonicas" in the South) bloom in late winter or early spring.

Practically speaking, camellias are best grown in the eastern third of Texas. The combination of acid soil, rainfall and temperatures are much more conducive to success with all three of the species mentioned in East Texas. Even there, camellias are likely to require considerable attention to watering, mulching and soil amendment than some gardeners are willing to provide. Sasanquas are considered to be somewhat easier to grow than japonicas and are often used as hedges as well as specimen plants and as background shrubs in borders.



***Camellia in a container
growing in College
Station***

Another possibility for growing camellias is to place them in large containers. Growing camellias in my College Station soil and water is not very practical, but I have a fairly large specimen growing in a 22-inch clay pot that is thriving on an open porch

where it receives morning sun and afternoon shade. I also provide water from a cistern containing rainfall runoff from the roof. Our local water has too much sodium for continued success with camellias or many other ornamental plants. The soil mix I have used is about 1/2 sphagnum peat moss, 1/4 sharp builder's sand, and 1/4 compost.

Camellias have been important to southern gardeners from the mid-1800s to present. Unlike old garden roses, that may be rooted fairly easily from cuttings and were grown in nearly every southern garden, camellias have always been favorites in upscale gardens where the relatively high cost of the plants and difficulty in propagating them were not as significant. Although japonica camellias sometimes set seeds that can be germinated, most are reproduced from cuttings or grafted onto sasanqua rootstocks.

Among the first camellias brought to America was 'Alba Plena', a beautiful, formal pure white, which is still popular today. Other Southern favorites include 'Purple Dawn', 'Pink Perfection', 'Rose Dawn', 'Professor Sargent' and 'Debutante'. With careful selection it is possible to have camellias blooming from November through April. The plants grow relatively slowly, but begin flowering at a young age. At peak bloom times the bushes can be quite colorful. Individual flowers are often picked and floated in bowls.

Garden Checklist for January-February 2007 By Dr. William C. Welch

Now is an excellent time to transplant mature or established trees and shrubs while they are dormant.

Make flower and vegetable garden plans now before the rush of spring planting. Time spent in armchair gardening before the fireplace will pay off in improved plant selection. Besides, it is fun to page through the garden catalogs.

Sow seeds in flats or containers to get a jump on plant growth before hot weather arrives. Petunias, begonias, and impatiens should be sown in early January. Warm temperature plants, such as tomatoes, peppers, marigolds, and periwinkles, should be sown in late January or early February.

Apply a light application of fertilizer to established pansy plantings. Use one-half pound of ammonium sulfate per 100 square feet of bed area. Repeat the application every 4 to 6 weeks, depending on rainfall. Dried blood meal is also an excellent source of fertilizer for pansies.

Prepare beds and garden area for spring planting.

Select and order gladiolus corms for February/March planting. Plant at two-week intervals to prolong flowering period.

Check junipers and other narrow-leaf evergreens for bagworm pouches. The insect eggs over winter in the pouch, and start the cycle again by emerging in the spring to begin feeding on the foliage. Hand removal and burning of the pouches are ways of reducing the potential damage next spring.

The life of the plant received as a Christmas gift can be prolonged with proper care. Keep the soil moist, but provide drainage so that excess moisture can flow from the pot. Keep the plant out of range of heating ducts and away from heating units. Keep in a cool room at night, preferably at 60 to 65 degrees F.

Don't fertilize newly set out trees or shrubs until after they have started to grow, and then only very lightly the first year.

When buying plants, the biggest is not always the best, especially when dealing with bare-root plants. The medium to small sizes (4 to 6 feet) are usually faster to become established and more effective in the landscape than the large sizes.

Hold off on pruning bush roses until February or early March. Use good shears that will make clean cuts. Remove dead, dying, and weak canes. Leave 4 to 8 healthy canes, and remove approximately one-half of the top growth and height of the plant.

Now is an excellent time to select and plant container-grown roses to fill in those bare spots in your rose garden.

When pruning shrubs, first prune out any dead or damaged branches; then thin out by removing about one-third of the canes or stems at ground level, removing the oldest canes only; and last, shape the rest of the plant, but do not cut everything back to the same height.

Water foliage plants as well as other containerized plants only when needed and not by the calendar.

Climbing roses should be trained but not pruned. Weave long canes through openings in trellises or arbors and tie them with jute twine or plastic/wire plant ties. Securing canes now prevents damage from winter winds, and contributes toward a more refined look to the garden when roses are blooming. Wait until after the spring flowering period to prune climbing or once-blooming shrub roses.

PLANT EXCHANGE

Thanks for the responses to our listings last month. Keep checking this spot! If you are searching for a particular plant, or if you have way too much of a good thing, contact me (Ann McLain, 979-798-2284 or amclain@annsgarden.com), and I will try to connect you with your opposite number.

WANTED:

- Someone is looking for short shrubs, something one to two feet tall, and likely to stay that way. Perennials that can be used like a shrub might do the job, too.
- Someone is looking for plants that produce berries in the fall. These berries should be something edible by birds on migration. These would be used in a garden project at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and at the Quintana Migration Sanctuary.
- Several folks are looking for plants that are good nectar sources for hummingbirds and butterflies. Some of this would go to the above project, and some might find its way to our Spring Plant Sale.

AVAILABLE:

- There are a lot of gingers looking for new homes. These are of various kinds: shell, spiral, butterfly, and so on. It's a good way to get a new garden space going in a hurry.

Why Garden? The National Garden Bureau's Top Ten Reasons

from the National Garden Bureau

Cell phones, PDA's, and MP3 players have become the tools of our modern lives. But it wasn't that long ago that a shovel, a patch of soil and a bag of seeds were the only tools needed to provide sustenance and satisfaction. Gardening was a part of daily life. Ask any gardener today who they garden and you'll get a variety of reasons why it's important to them.

Garden for safe, healthy food. Reports of food-borne illnesses and contamination regularly appear in the news media. Growing concerns about pesticides in our food supply have led to an increased interest in organic gardening and availability of organic produce. Processed foods contain additives and preservatives that many consumers want to avoid. The National Garden Bureau believes an easy solution is to grow your own vegetables. It's estimated that during WWII, 20 million homeowners had Victory Gardens that produced close to 40% of the fresh vegetables consumed in the United States. Start your own garden and know the food you're eating is fresh and safe with fantastic flavor not always found in grocery store produce.

Garden for Exercise. Tied of the gym routine? Get a good workout without even thinking about it. Gardening activities provide both cardio and aerobic exercise. Studies show that an hour of moderate gardening can burn up to 300 calories for women, almost 400 calories for men. For older people, especially women, gardening can help reduce osteoporosis. Mowing the grass is like taking a vigorous walk, bending and stretching to plant a garden compares to an exercise class, while hauling plants and soil is similar to weightlifting. Adaptive tools help those whose physical limitations prevent some activities. And after you're finished, you see immediate results in your garden even as your physical health improves - without being bored.

Garden to add beauty. A house with a nice yard is a pleasure to look at and satisfying to live in. Your home can be made more inviting simply by adding a container of colorful flowers near the front door. Herbs in the kitchen add freshness to the room, as well as flavor to daily meals. Trees and shrubs not only provide color and shade, but shelter for birds and wildlife. Think of the garden as another room to be enjoyed whether you are inside or outside the house.



Cuphea macropetala, a Texas-sized specimen

Garden to learn. Gardeners find that the more they learn about plants and gardening, the more they want to know. Problems with insects or spots on leaves provide the opportunity to find out the cause and understand how to keep plants healthy. Moving to a new house may mean leaving favorite plants but also provides the opportunity to discover new plants and growing conditions. There are a variety of ways to increase gardening know-how such as seminars, Master Gardener programs, vo-tech courses and formal degree programs at a college or university.

Garden to make money. For some people gardening is a lifelong hobby. For others, the love of plants can lead to a rewarding job at a local garden center, a large global company, or even owning their own business. A garden can be a source of flowers, vegetables, herbs, and other crops that can be sold at local farmer's markets and roadside stands. And whether you live in your dream home or plan on moving soon, gardening adds value to your property. Real estate agents estimate that attractive landscaping increases a home's value by as much as 15%. It also creates interest in the house and can mean the difference between a potential buyer simply driving by or stopping to take a closer look.

Garden to meet people. Gardening is a great way to expand your social circle. Whether it's with someone who lives down the street or halfway around the world on the Internet, gardeners love to talk about plants. Surplus tomatoes, a bouquet of flowers, or an extra plant, are gifts to be shared with friends and neighbors. Meeting other gardeners through garden clubs, plant organizations, and gardening websites is an easy way to share information, ask questions and get involved.

Garden to be creative. Gardening provides an outlet for creative and artistic expression. A garden's design can reflect a personal sense of style such as a romantic cottage garden or a peaceful Japanese garden, as well as provide a showcase for art and sculpture. Like to try something new? With the wide variety of seeds and plants available in garden centers, it's easy to experiment with new plants or change a garden's color scheme every year.

Garden to win. For people with a competitive streak, gardening is a friendly way to show off their skills. Garden clubs regularly have shows that highlight the best flowers grown by local gardeners. County and state fairs provide an opportunity to show everyone the giant pumpkin, beautiful beans or luscious tomatoes harvested from the garden. Competitive gardening is not only fun and interesting, there can even be national recognition and financial rewards.

Garden for emotional needs and spiritual connections. Gardens play an important part in our well being. A garden might serve as a tranquil retreat or private escape from the demands of everyday life. The beauty of flowers can lift spirits, while pulling weeds can be a great release for stress and excess energy. A harvest of colorful flowers or tasty vegetables provides a sense of achievement and feelings of success, while neighbors and visitors often express their appreciation for those efforts.

On a higher level, gardening provides a spiritual connection to life. It's a miracle to take a tiny seed, nurture it, and watch it grow into a beautiful flower or delicious

food for your table. Tending a garden also contributes to improving your own living space, the environment and our planet.

Garden for lasting memories. Yards that once grew gardens have been replaced with hot tubs and driveways. Today's kids are missing the joy of cutting a bouquet of flowers for their mom or tasting the sweetness of a cherry tomato picked right from the plant. Gardening is a fun activity that can be shared with children and grandchildren, even if the garden is a single container or small spot in the yard. And a garden provides a beautiful way to remember a special person or time of life.

The National Garden Bureau encourages you to discover your own reason to become a gardener. And forget that excuse about not having enough time. Gardening takes less time than that new television show and is much easier than getting a new video game to work on your computer. Whatever reason appeals to you, gardening is a satisfying activity that provides a lifetime of benefits.

Happy February Birthday Wishes

Candace Novak – Feb. 21

Gwen Collins Feb 22

Barbara Ray March 4

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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A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Paul Cig".