

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

Heather Vincent, Editor

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Little Known Facts.... March's flower is the Daffodil

Botanical Names: Narcissus

Other Names: Jonquil, Narcissus

Description: A trumpet shaped blossom surrounded by petals usually of a contrasting color.

Colors: yellow-white, yellow-orange, pink, lime green

Season: Late Fall to Spring

Meaning: Based on the Greek mythology character, Narcissus, who was known to be so arrogant that when he looked into a mirror he fell in love with his reflection. He was later said to have been turned into the flower. Chivalry, respect, you are my only one, the sun shines when I'm with you, unrequited love.

Bloom Size: 3 to 4 inches in diameter

Color Pattern: bi-color

Facts: National flower of Wales. Flowers are fragrant. Some species have frilly petals. Many poets such as Oscar Wilde and William Wordsworth have written about this flower. It is said that Prince Charles receives one Daffodil annually as payment for the unused land in Sicily.

News...

NOTES FROM THE PREZ...

March Madness is supposed to be about basket ball. In the Master Gardeners it's about "Oh no, oh my the plant sale is only a month away! We're not ready, it's to soon. HELP! This winter was especially hard on the Education Station, too cold, too wet, and still the rains come. We do need help, with propagation, and with getting the grounds ready. Pruning and weeding must be done. Yes, I hear you. You have pruning and weeding to do in your garden, as we all do. But remember, the Education Station is no longer, just the place a few of us go each week to visit and play. It is now the face of all Master Gardeners. There may be 10 or 15 of your friends who will see your yard, but there will 100 to 150 people who will see the MG gardens. What do you suppose the public will think of our ability as gardeners if the place is not the best it can be?

O.K. I'll get off my soap box. It's spring, go plant a flower, or smell a rose, or just sit outside and let a mocking bird tell you how wonderful life is in his neighborhood.

Barbara Ross

MARCH GENERAL MEETING...

Our business meeting was preceded by a program given by John Ferguson, who talked about organic fertilizers for gardens. Minutes and Treasurer's Report for February were accepted as submitted. Ted Jagen reported on our terrific month. The Fruit Tree Sale netted us \$2,933, which puts us in the black on this year's budget.

Ted introduced some new guidelines for bulk purchases made for resale to the membership. We all like to buy plants and supplies cheap, but as these opportunities have become more frequent, it has become necessary to have a system of accountability in place. Any purchase of this sort must have someone willing to keep careful records, and it must be approved by the board.

Also, Barbara Ross reminded us that each garden and activity at the Education Station is overseen by a specific person, who must account for any expenditures. If members buy something for the garden without the knowledge and approval of the person in charge, they should not expect to be reimbursed.

The February Fruit Tree Sale was such a success (we were sold out in an hour), that Gil Livanec plans to triple our order for next year's sale. He distributed a list of fruit trees that members may now order for themselves. Plants will be delivered next winter. If you want to get in on this, contact Gil or Barb Bruyere by April.

Preparation for the Plant Sale (April 21 – get it on your calendar!) is in full swing. Barbara Brown announced that plants are still needed, bring them to the greenhouse. Candace Novak will be arranging to get the banner hung in Angleton. Next month's meeting will focus on what we all need to do to make the sale a success.

There is mixed news from the Education Station. Jesse Knight reported that the vegetable plot needs more tilling, but it is presently too wet. Ray Michalik reported that the tractor is on the blink again. On the other hand, we are getting more community service volunteers to help with heavy work.

Barbara Ross announced the death of former president, John Alcorn, in February. BCMGA sent flowers.

Donie Stowers thanked those who brought refreshments, and asked for volunteers for next month. The meeting was adjourned.

News from the Demonstration Gardens...

By Ray Michalik

And then the rains hit. We received 6 1/2 inches of rain at the Green House. It was welcome as it was getting somewhat dry. The County brought in their large tractor and tiller and tilled up our veggie garden area. They will re-till it again now that it has rained on it. They really are doing a good job for us.

All the good things I said about our John Deere lawnmower last month has come back to bite me, you know where. I have the problem narrowed down to some kind of an electrical malfunction as it will not start. It may have to go to the shop for this but I haven't quite given up on it yet.

Jessie and help has planted many veggie seeds in the starter containers and all are doing very well. He may have a few to sell. If interested see him.

We are still getting community workers out to help us every Fri. except the third Fri. as the junior Master Gardeners have that day reserved for them

If you don't have anything to do on Tue. or Fri. come out and have some fun working in the soil planting or snipping or pulling weeds. The coffee pot is always on.

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

News and Notes from the Coordinator Welcome the Master Gardener interns of 2007 Dan, Chelsea, Ella, Cheryl, Rich, Dan, Jim, Cindy, Jimmy, Jane, Robin, Frank and Brenda. The class ended April 5, and thanks to Monica Krancevic's leadership, the slate of speakers and field trips was excellent. We already

have interns coming out to the demo gardens, and Chelsea has volunteered to assist with the newsletter. Farmer's Market is coming up, beginning Saturday, May 26 and continuing every Saturday through the month of June. We will have Family and Consumer Science Agent, Sharon Trower, as our guest on June 2. Sharon will present some goodies from the garden. Fire Ants are out in droves due to all the rain/high water table. Now is the time to treat. The organic bait, Conserve, contains the active ingredient Spinosad. Amdro and Over and Out are also effective. Most baits and contact pesticides take three to four weeks to work fully. While you wait, existing mounds can be treated with mound drenches such as permethrins.

The Organic Gardener...

By Ellen Pedisich

I met the new class of Master Gardeners and I am impressed with their backgrounds and enthusiasm. Some of them are interested in organic gardening and so I am looking forward to gardening with them. I hope some of the students like to make compost tea.

In the past few weeks I helped prune rose bushes at the education center. I love pruning roses. When I start cutting a bush I think that by cutting the branches I will get to know its secret, how it can make beautiful, sweet smelling flowers. Then when I finish cutting the bush I don't have the answer.

I have a new book entitled "Teaming with Microbes, A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web". When I opened the book and glanced at a photograph I saw a "foraging, root-eating nematode trapped by a fungal hydra." That is exactly what I need, fungal hydra. This book is just right for me.

Here is my haiku.

Beautiful Knock-Out
How do you make your flowers?
Will I ever know?

Habitat For Humanity...

By Gary Gardner, Sr.

The next Habitat For Humanity build has been announced. This will be house no. 59 and will be at 809 Godfrey St. in Clute, Texas. This is off of Lazy Lane which runs between 332 and Plantation. The scheduled date for the landscaping is March 31st. Let us hope that this build goes better for them (weather) than the last one did.

The Inquiring Gardner...

By Ann McLain

To plant or not to plant, that is indeed the question at this time of year. See, I have these little bitty baby tomatoes, and I haven't decided what to do with them. Producing happy, healthy tomato seedlings is easy; it's what comes next that gives me problems.

When I took the Master Gardening classes, I was told that tomatoes need to be in the ground by March 1. That was pretty exciting information to this transplant from the far north – after all, up there I usually tried to get tomatoes planted by Memorial Day. Wow, think how many tomatoes I'd get starting that early!

But it turns out that not everyone agrees with that March 1 planting date. The Peltiers, who are among the leading tomato raisers in our chapter, don't plant their tomatoes (many, MANY tomatoes) until the soil is warm. Pam assures me that is almost always April 1 or later. Jesse Knight, who also knows a thing or three about tomatoes, says he might plant a few tomatoes this early, but he'd save back most of them for later. What to do?

And deciding when to plant isn't the end of it either. In the past three years I have planted early and planted late, I have grown in the ground and in big tubs on the driveway. I have tried spring and I have tried fall. What I haven't done is to produce much in the way of tomatoes. When the stink bugs don't get the fruits, the plants succumb to tomato blight. Or maybe tomato hornworms. And then there were the neighbor's escaped fallow deer, who neatly sheared off my tomato plants last summer. So maybe the question is not when, but whether I should plant tomatoes at all.

So let's review here. The pros on the early planting side are: you get a head start on a longer growing season before the heat of summer takes the plants. (Which will happen no matter when you plant.) You get big healthy plants before the bugs get active and find them. All this assumes that the weather genies will come together in a favorable way this spring. The cons are just that – the weather genies may not cooperate, at all. Plants that like warm weather don't grow very enthusiastically when the temperatures are chilly, and moist overcast weather may encourage fungal problems like early blight. You can spray for that, but now I'm losing interest.

And how about those bugs? It has occurred to me that probably when the temperatures are warm enough to encourage tomato growth, they're also warm enough to encourage stink bug activity. And I have been encountering little baby stink bugs already, so it's not like they have to fly in from the Valley. My proposed tomato plants would be a welcome treat.

The early planting folks usually recommend wrapping the tomato towers in horticultural cloth, to hold in heat for the tomatoes and to hide the plants from the insects. That makes good sense. On the other hand, wrapping the cages in protective layers also seems to hold in humidity, which may not be a good thing. (Remember the fungal disorders.)

The bottom line is this – whenever you plant, daily diligence is the key. Nothing beats hornworms better than hand picking, even if they do wriggle. Last spring Ray Michalik demonstrated to all of us at the Education Station his vastly entertaining stinkbug extractor, a hand vacuum with a long hose. Zzzzip, they're gone – what fun! But even this technological leap forward requires daily use, because if the bugs get even a day's head start, there's no stopping them.

Hmmm. Tomatoes from the grocery store, all pale and insipid? Daily warfare with the insects and the weather to get a few tomatoes before the heat sets in? To plant or not to plant, that is indeed the question.

News for MG's and MN's...

This may be of interest to MG's and MN's. New Website All About Plants Temple, Texas - When drought, noxious weeds, wildfire, or human-made disturbances negatively impact the landscape, the USDA-NRCS sets out to find solutions through plants. The NRCS plant materials program provides native plants that can help solve natural resource problems. Once a problem is identified, it is our job to seek out plants that show promise for meeting the conservation need, said Rob Ziehr, NRCS plant materials specialist in Temple, Texas. We then test the plant performance and, once proven, we release it to the private sector for commercial production. Historically, NRCS employees across the country have collected various plant species for scientists at plant materials centers to work with. But the agency is expanding its approach to plant collection and inviting the public to be a part of the process. We have developed a website that will serve as a source of information regarding plant materials in Texas, Ziehr said. But, more importantly, we have included detailed information on how to collect plants we can use in our research. The website address is <http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/pmc>. Ziehr said that detailed instructions on plant collection and documentation forms can be found on the website. Of the 27 plant materials centers in the country, three are located in Texas at Kingsville, Knox City, and Nacogdoches. With more than 550 active studies on real-world conservation issues nationwide, the plant materials program offers immediate practical application. Contact Lori Valadez, State Public Affairs Specialist 101 South Main, Temple, Texas 76501 Phone: 254.742.9811 Fax: 254.742.9939 Rob Ziehr, Plant Materials Specialist 101 South Main, Temple, Texas 76501 Phone: 254.742.9888

When to Prune Flowering Shrubs

by Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, Extension Horticulturist,
Texas Cooperative Extension

If a shrub is grown for its flowers, time the pruning to minimize disruption of blooming. Spring-flowering shrubs bloom on last season's growth and should be pruned soon after they bloom.

This allows for vigorous summertime growth and results in plenty of flower buds the following year. Some examples of shrubs that bloom on last season's growth are:

Cercis canadensis - Redbud

Chaenomeles japonica - Japanese Quince

Chionanthus virginicus - Fringe Tree

Forsythia spp. - all Forsythia species

Lonicera spp. - Honeysuckle



Cassias need only light pruning

Rapheolepis indica - Indian Hawthorn

Rhododendron spp. - Azaleas & Rhododendrons

Rosa spp. - Rambling Rose species

Spiraea spp. - early white Spirea species

Viburnum spp. - Viburnum species

Some shrubs that bloom after June usually do so from buds which are formed on shoots that grow the same spring. These shrubs should be pruned in late winter to promote vigorous shoot growth in spring. Examples of shrubs that bloom on current season's growth include:

Abelia X. grandiflora - glossy Abelia

Buddleia davidii or *B. globosa* - Butterfly Bush

Hibiscus syriacus - Shrub Althea

Hydrangea arborescens - Hills of Snow

Hypericum spp. - Saint-Johns-wort

Lagerstroemia indica - Crape Myrtle

Rosa spp. - Bush Rose

Vitex agnus-castus - Chaste Tree

PLANT EXCHANGE

Okay, people. I know you are all out there trying to pick up the pieces from this unfortunate winter. I know that some of you are discovering that, despite the cold, you have some plants that have increased beyond all bounds since last spring. And other of you are discovering that there are some prominent holes in your garden beds. I even suspect that some of you are discovering both things to be true at the same time. So here's your chance. Find a home for your surplus and/or get something to fill the blanks. Do it now.

WANTED:

- Someone is looking for flowering ground covers – she has a lot of ground to cover.
- Nectar plants (for butterflies and hummingbirds) are needed.
- Someone needs plants to be grown near the Gulf – salt-tolerant stuff. Contributions would be lovely, but if you have knowledge/experience with this kind of gardening, even suggestions would be appreciated.
- And there is still a need for short shrubs and for fall-berrying shrubs.

AVAILABLE:

- A whole lot of basil seed is available for the asking, various kinds, I believe.
- And a whole lot of gingers still need homes – now is the time to get them planted.

If you can help out, by taking or giving, let me know (amclain@annsgarden.com, 979-798-2284), and I will try to connect you to your opposite number.

Louisiana Iris

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

Louisiana irises are perennials that can be grown successfully in every area of Texas and the Gulf Coast, but thrive best in the eastern third of the state where their ancestors are native. They also occur naturally in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

Mature plant size varies from 1 to 6 feet and flower sizes from 3 to 7 inches across. Flowers occur in March and April. Because all the primary colors are inherent in the various species that contributed to this group, there is no limit to the color range. The Louisianas, for example, include the purest form of red of any iris.

Louisiana irises prefer an acid soil in the range of 6.5 or lower. They like large quantities of fertilizer and water, but their greatest need for both of these comes during the naturally cool and moist fall and winter seasons. They are among the few irises that will thrive in poorly drained soils, and may be effectively used along streams and lakes where they may be inundated periodically during changing water levels. Foliage is lush and requires heavy fertilization to remain healthy and productive.

Some varieties go dormant during the heat of summer, leaving dead foliage that should be cut back or removed. New foliage will appear again in the fall. Fall is the best season for transplanting. Beds should be well tilled and amended with large amounts of compost, peat, or pine bark. Rhizomes should be planted just below ground level and kept moist until well established. Clumps spread quickly, and individual rhizomes should be spaced several feet apart to avoid need for annual division.

Mulching in the summer protects rhizomes against sunscald. Winter protection is not necessary, but could help prevent the evaporation of essential moisture in northern and dry areas of the region. Azalea-camellia fertilizers are recommended, along with water soluble fertilizers designed to lower the soil pH. After bloom is completed in the spring, the stalks should be cut back to the rhizome. Old rhizomes do not bloom again, but increase to produce the following year's crop.

These flamboyant flowers are attractive to bees, and the visits of these insects often result in pollination and the production of fertile seed in the irises' large seed pods. Ripening seeds sap the plant's strength, so they should be removed unless, of course, the grower has decided to raise new plants from seed. If so, leave the pods in place until they turn yellow-green in July or



August, shell out the seeds before they dry, and plant at once into pots of well-prepared soil. Provide adequate protection over the winter, and plant the young seedlings into permanent locations in March.

Although not always available in a great variety of colors, Louisiana irises are sold by some garden centers in Texas. Mail order sources are another possibility. Special plant sales, such as the Bulb Mart in Houston each fall and March Mart at the Mercer Arboretum, usually offer a wide variety of Louisiana irises.

<p><u>2007Calendar of Events:</u></p> <p>Master Gardner Training classes</p> <p>April 3</p> <p>9-12 Plant Propagation</p> <p>12:30 – 1:45 Herbs</p> <p>2-3:30 Tropicals</p> <p>April 5</p> <p>9-9:30 Junior Master Gardeners</p> <p>9:30 – 10:30 Composting</p> <p>10:30 – 12 Native/Invasive/Adaption</p> <p>12:30 – 2:30 Project Presentation</p> <p>April 21 Plant Sale</p>	<p><u>NEWS AND NOTES:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pecan Grafting Field Day</p> <p>The annual Brazoria County Pecan Grafting Field Day, sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension and Texas Parks and Wildlife, will be held Saturday, April 7, 9:00 a.m. to noon, at Varner-Hogg State Park, 1527 FM 2852, West Columbia, with registration at 8:45.</p> <p>Bill Goodrum, local pecan grower, will give a report on the Brazoria County pecan crop and Texas A&M Extension Pecan Specialist Bill Ree will discuss pecan integrated pest management.</p> <p>Following the seminar, local growers will demonstrate grafting techniques. Graftwood and grafting supplies will be available for sale following the workshop.</p> <p>There will be great door prizes, refreshments and grafting supplies.</p> <p>Two Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be offered for licensed private pesticide applicators.</p> <p>For additional information, call the Extension Office at 979/864-1558, 979/388-1558 or 281/756-1558, ext. 112.</p>
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Garden Checklist for March, 2007

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

Check with your local county agent for the average last killing freeze date for your area. Killing freezes can and do occur after this date but it is a good indication.

Pruning of evergreens and summer flowering trees and shrubs should be completed in early March.

Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs as soon as they finish blooming.

Start hanging baskets of petunias, ferns and others for another dimension in landscape color.

Plant dahlia tubers in fertile, well-drained soil.

In North Texas there is still time to plant seeds of your favorite annuals in flats to be transplanted out-of-doors when danger of frost is past.

Select and order caladium tubers as well as geranium and coleus plants for late April and early May planting. Do not plant caladiums until soil temperature reaches 70F.

As camellia and azalea plants finish blooming, fertilize them with three pounds of azalea-camellia fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed area. Check mulch on azalea and camellia beds and add where needed.

Fertilize roses every 4 to 6 weeks from now until September.

Beware of close-out sales on bare-root trees and shrubs. The chance of survival is rather low on bare-root plants this late in the season. Your best bet at this time of year is to depend on container-grown or balled-and-burlapped plants for landscape use.

Happy March & April Birthday Wishes

Barbara Ray March 4th
Barbara Brown April 27th
Paula Craig April 28th
Anna Gawlik April 18th
Dan Rhodes April 4th
Donie Stowers April 29th

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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