

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

Heather Vincent, Editor

January, 2008

Vol. 25, Iss. 26



The Giant Swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*) has a wing span of to 6 1/4 inch (15.9 cm). These beautiful butterflies are some of the largest found in North America. Giant Swallowtails can be recognized not only by their large size, but also by the "tail" on each hindwing, their blackish brown dorsal wing surfaces and more yellowish ventral wing surfaces, and by the two slightly irregular rows of yellow spots that merge before the tips of the forewings. The third yellow spot from the tip of the forewing has an off-center dark brown spot inside it, giving it a lopsided cutout appearance.

News...

Notes from the Prez...

By Barbara Ross

Greetings, and Happy New Year. The first 4 months of the year are becoming our most busy time. In the past we would sit around at the Education Station, drinking coffee and looking at seed catalogs. But that was before the Citrus sale. The new Master Gardener Training class begins Jan. 24th and runs every Thursday thru March 27th.

This month on the 26th, we will have an Open House to introduce the public to the things we will have for sale on Feb. 16th. The trees, etc will be delivered on the 9th. Also in February, (the 2nd) we will put on our yearly Gardening Seminar in Clute.

In March we will be doing winter clean up and spring planting. And of course, lots of propagation for the April Plant Sale which is on the 19th of April. The week before our sale, we are scheduled to have an information booth and put on programs for the TDECU and DER. The dates are April 10th, 11th, & 12th. This will be great publicity for our sale.

So---Busy, busy, busy! We can always use more help. Give us a call. we'll find you a job.

And Thank you for reelecting me for another year.

Happy Gardening,

Barbara Ross

NEWS FROM THE JANUARY MEETING...

At the BCMGA meeting January 8, Treasurer Ted Jagen presented the summary figures for 2007. Thanks to the two \$5000 grants we won during 2007, our total gross income for the year was over \$32,000. However, expenses were also up, a total of over \$25,000, as we began spending the grant on their designated projects. This income level, which was \$11,000 more than in any previous year, means that Ted "will have to figure out how to file a tax return", which has never been necessary before. This is progress.

The 2008, which was presented at the meeting, includes spending the remainder of the grant money to finish those projects. One still to be finished is the Rainwater Harvesting Project. Ray Michalik reported on the progress so far. The reservoir tanks have been set on their concrete pads, and the equalizer lines are done. All the downspouts but one are connected in; the final downspout will require a very tall ladder or some other arrangement. Still to be done is setting up the pump and the pressure tank, and connecting into the irrigation system.

The new budget includes expenditures for other useful items, such as repairs to the shade house, and construction of a second one to allow us to raise more plants. It also allows for the purchase of display boards, which will be very useful in our outreach activities.

One of the major sources of income for 2008 is coming up soon. The Fruit Tree Sale will be held February 16, beginning at 8 am, and it will be all hands on deck to make this a success. Gil Livanec outlined the jobs that need to be done. One big job will be receiving the sale trees. The potted citrus is expected on Friday, February 8. Helpers also will be needed on the day of the sale to keep check-out and loading moving smoothly.

Our group is a volunteer organization, established to assist the extension service in communicating good gardening techniques. Consequently, our volunteer hours are reported annually to the state organization. Unfortunately, a lot of us haven't reported hours for 2007. If you are one of those, please get your hours to Don Gerard. Texas Master Gardeners are required to do 12 hours of volunteer service and 6 hours of advanced training each year in order to maintain certification. More clarification on all this will be coming soon. In the meantime, you can add to your 2008 advanced training hours by attending our next Open House. This will be on Saturday, January 26, from 9 am to noon. The topic this time will be growing fruit in Brazoria

County. Gil Livanec will offer several sessions on citrus and on other fruits, there will be fruit tasting, and Lee Withers will show us how to do some herb flavored citrus goodies. It should be fun. Join us.

And finally, our 2008 training classes will begin on January 24 and continue each Thursday through March 27. Classes are from 9 am to about 3:30 in the afternoon. This year we are hoping to establish a better network of mentoring for the new folks, and an important part of that is for us to attend some classes and get acquainted with the trainees. And attending those classes counts for advanced training hours, too.

Donie would like us all to remember to sign up to bring food to monthly meetings. Thanks to all who did so this month.

News at the Demonstration Garden...

By Ray Michalik

Quiet, Quiet! Tell the kids to be quiet. Listen, isn't that spring you coming. Really it is just around the corner. It's time to start thinking of what you're going to plant in your spring garden.

First get all the grass out of the garden spot along with the winter weeds and all the old winter veggies that have bolted or gone bad.

We haven't had any maintenance or mechanical problems at the green house but there hasn't been to much going on with winter hovering over us.

The inside of the big barn really is looking good as Billy Heck brought his power washer out and did a through washing of the exterior walls and outside walls of the inside storage room. After the exterior walls of the inside storage room dried Billy, Roy and Larry painted them a bright white. We can now use the wall, rather than using the regular screen, for a power point presentation if we want to. We would have to cover the windows with some dark plastic to make it dark enough inside the building but I think it will work.

If you don't have anything to do on Tue. or Fri. mornings come on out to the training station and have some fun pulling a weed or two or maybe plant a tomato plant as there will be plenty of room this year. The coffee pot is always on and Jessie may bake on off his famous cakes and bring it out

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!

The Organic Gardener...

By Ellen Pedisich

This farmer of micro-organisms is getting organized again. First of all, thanks to you for putting your plant trimmings in the compost bins. I am designating the pallet bins for plant trimmings and the wire cages for working compost. Also, I will have a pile of screened compost for you to take to your garden area here at the MG site. Hopefully I will stay organized and you will see this composting endeavor bring about a bountiful compost crop. The compost area will be full of decomposers from bacteria to earthworms so that the humus you put in your garden will enrich your soil and your plants.

Haiku

Decomposers help
make humus, enrich the soil,
make beautiful plants.



By Paula Craig

Extension begins the New Year with a new name and a renewed mission to serve the residents of Texas. We are now the **Texas AgriLife Extension Service**. The change will require new letterhead, a new Texas Master Gardener logo, new t-shirts and badges and as much practice to memorize as putting "2008" on the checks you write.

Our new Mission statement is, "Improving the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high-quality, relevant education." As Texas Master Gardeners and especially as Brazoria County Master Gardeners, you have accomplished this mission many times over.

Best wishes for a happy and productive new year.

Reporting Volunteer Hours—REMINDER

It is essential that everyone report all volunteer hours by February 1st. The Extension Service uses the values of your time and effort when lobbying the state legislature for annual funding. Please report to Don Gerard. If you have email, he will be happy to send you a spreadsheet that you can complete online.

Contact Don at dgerard@brazosport.cc.tx.us.

If you conduct a seminar or workshop as a master gardener, please report attendance directly to me. I need number, gender and your best estimate of race.

Happenings at the Vegetable Garden

By Jesse Knight

A variety of cool weather vegetables have been planted and are now growing at the Education station. As spring approaches, gardeners everywhere will be busy starting their spring planting. We, at the Education Station, are excited and can't wait to start working on vegetable trials. Since tomatoes are everyone's favorite they will be our first trial. We (Jesse, Billy, & Roy) will plant as many different varieties as we have room to plant. We will plant three plants of each variety. We'll keep records of production, and note weather conditions, (hot & wet or hot & dry), and most important, how they taste. These trials will be a challenge and a lot of hard work.

By fall we should have data on the best varieties for Brazoria County.

December's Weather from the Education Station...

By Ted Jagen

High Temp.: 79.7 deg. on the 12th

Low Temp.: 31.0 deg. on the 23rd

Max. Wind: 29 mph (West) on the 26th

Dec. Rain: 1.19 in.

Chill Hours (season to 12/31): 135 hrs

Dec. Hours Below Freezing: 1.5 hrs

The Inquiring Gardner...

By Ann McLain

It's probably not too late to make a few garden resolutions. I don't usually bother with the regular kind of resolutions, the kind that attempt to improve my personal life. At this point in my life, I know all about how I should give up the kinds of food I love and take up boring exercise. I also know me – it ain't gonna happen. But resolutions aimed at better gardening might work. If it doesn't involve celery sticks and aerobic classes, I might be able to stick to the plan.

My first resolution for the year is to take better care of my tools, particularly the cutting tools. This intention was stimulated by the imminent demise of a pair of pruners, which barely cut at all these days. Part of their problem is that the blades no longer fit snugly against each other – a result, I think, of using them to do jobs they were never meant for. They are further handicapped by the build up of gunk on the blades, which would have been helped by washing and/or the use of steel wool. The fact that the blades are no longer sharp seems immaterial. So I will clean my tools, I will use the right tool for the job, and I will learn how to sharpen blades. (Warning to all you helpful guys at the Education Station: I'm probably going to need some advice and instruction. Take cover now.)

Also, I am resolving to get the cool season planting done before it gets hot, even if I don't feel like it. You know how it is – when the day is gloomy, cold, or wet, it seems like there is always tomorrow. But we all know that this cool weather is a good time to get hardy woody

plants into the ground so that they can spread their roots before the stressful warm months arrive. It might not be a good time to divide herbaceous stuff, since that would probably stimulate new growth. But if I get the shrubby stuff done in the next month, I'll be ready to tackle the rest once the risk of freezes is past.

And looking at what's still on my driveway, I also need to resolve not to buy plants for which I don't have a designated place. Or maybe it should be that I will avoid getting more plants if I can't put them into the ground within two weeks. Either way, I doubt that this one is going to work, but it's worth a try.

What else might I try to improve? Maybe I should resolve to get with the water-wise program – eliminating very thirsty plants, grouping plants with similar water needs, learning techniques to minimize loss of moisture from my beds, and so on. A good place to start would be the Rainwater Harvesting project getting underway at the Education Station. We hope that we will be having some seminars on that topic before summer, and I'm looking forward to it. After several years of 60+ inches of rain we might think we don't need to worry, but nothing changes like weather. Any predictions out there? Is this the year water-wise pays off? AS they say, stay tuned for developments.

Tropical Update ...

By Ed Barrios

We had the coldest night of the winter in early January, when it got to 27 deg. F at the Education Station early on 3rd. I was returning from vacation and did not see the damage to the plants in the tropical garden until the following Friday. There was typical damage expected at these temperatures to the bananas, gingers, costas, hibiscus, alocasias, bougainvilleas and most of the vines.

If you see damage to the plants in your yard, generally you DO NOT prune off the dead stalks or branches. You need to wait until late February / early March, when we are past the last frost date to do any pruning. You really do not know the extent of the damage and you could be pruning lots of your plant that is really still alive. The other danger, as I've mentioned before, if you prune tropicals in the winter and we get a warm spell, the plant will start to sprout fresh new growth. If a cool front follows, you will do even more damage to your struggling plants.

Finally, we have about another 1 ½ months where we could get

Happy January Birthday's

Jessie Knight 8th

Ellen Pedisich 14th

E.J. Rosser 24th

Judy Wood 31st

Master Gardener



January 26, 2008
9:00 – Noon

Master Gardener Education Station
Hospital Dr. at CR 171 – Angleton

Brazoria County Friendly and Tasty **Fruiting Plants**

Master Gardener Gil Livanec will present a program to help folks select the fruiting plants that grow and produce in our wonderful gumbo soil. He will concentrate on types of citrus and peaches and discuss other plants such as blackberries, grapes and figs.

This program will emphasize the **good-eating** fruits that will be offered at the second annual Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale scheduled for Saturday, February 16th.

A tasting party will follow program

Free Event

For information, call the Extension Office
979/864-1558 ✧ 979/388-1558 ✧ 281/756-1558
Ext. 112

2008 Events:

January...

8th – BCMGA Meeting
26th BCMGA Open House 9 am till noon (Dunes Day)
Spring 2008 Master Gardener Training. Jan 24th – March 27th. Classes on Thursday from 9 am – 3:30.
Applications available by calling your friendly county extension agent at (979)864-1558.

February...

2nd City of Clute with the Master Gardeners – Q & A
12th BCMGA Meeting
16th BCMGA Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale

March....

11th BCMGA Meeting

April....

8th BCMGA Meeting
19th Spring Plant Sale

May...

13th BCMGA Meeting
31st Farmer's Market – Every Saturday thru the end of June

June...

7th Farmer's Market
10th BCMGA Meeting
14th Farmer's Market
21st Farmer's Market
28th Farmer's Market

July...

8th BCMGA Meeting

August...

12th BCMGA Meeting

September...

9th BCMGA Meeting

October...

14th BCMGA Meeting

November...

11th BCMGA Meeting

December...

9th BCMGA Meeting

NEWS AND NOTES:

Our prayers go to the Tillman family in their time of sorrow.

**A Message from Ted....Dues are Due!!!
Please contact him if you have not paid them!!!!**

Dunes Day is coming up on the 26th. Sandra Smith will need lots of help not only staking and tying trees down on that date, but someone to help cut twine in advance of Saturday. She can get the twine to the Extension Office, but it will have to be cut in 3 ft. lengths. She needs some volunteers when she gets the twine. All help will be greatly appreciated by Sandra. If you can help please contact Sandra Smith at the extension office or by e-mail.

As most of us know, the first class of the new MG training class is Thursday, January 24th. As we did last year, we want to provide a covered dish luncheon for the class this first day. The morning session ends at 12:00 and we will begin serving at that time. Your help is appreciated and if there are questions contact Donie at: dstowers1@comcast.net

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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