

What's Growin' On . . .

The BCMGA Newsletter

Heather Vincent, Editor

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News...

NEWS FROM THE MARCH MEETING...

The general meeting on March 11, 2008 included an interesting presentation by DiAnna Munson on carnivorous plants. Along with an informative talk and pictures, she brought some of her insect-eating babies for show-and-tell.

During the business meeting we learned that Don Gerard is preparing a new up-to-date roster of members with phone numbers and email addresses. If your information has changed, please contact him with corrections.

Ed Barrios requested volunteers to serve on an awards committee. Members are Pam Peltier, Cindy Goodrum, and Don Gerard. If you wish to join them, contact one of them. The current class of interns will graduate at the May meeting, if they have completed their pay-back hours. (Time to get those phone hours done!) The awards committee plans to honor regular members at that time, for their service to the organization.

Ed announced that we will be re-visiting the Five Year Plan. As we work through our wish lists, some needs have changed, along with priorities. Ed will announce a meeting time; the meeting will be held at the head house at the Education Station.

A question has been raised about our meeting times. Some members are having a hard time getting to night meetings. An informal vote was taken to see how many favor keeping our present meeting schedule, and how many might prefer to meet during the day. Of those present, eleven voted for daytime meetings and thirteen voted to keep nighttime meetings. There were a few neutrals. Since folks that can't drive at night likely were not present, it was decided that we need to get a more complete poll of the membership before pursuing this idea.

The next Open House will be held Saturday, March 29 from 9am to noon. Topics will include a presentation about the native plants that will be a part of the plant sale, and demonstrations of pruning techniques. Everyone is welcome – bring/send your friends and neighbors.

In lieu of the Brazosport College gardening classes that we have taught in the past, we are offering the What's Growin' On Garden Series at the Education Station most Saturdays. The classes run from 9-12, and the charge is \$5 in advance or \$7 at the door. We have done three sessions so far, with small but enthusiastic audiences. There is NOT a class on March 29.

Ed urged congratulations to Dan Sebesta, who has gotten our demonstration fruit orchard started, and it's so nice to see trees, albeit small ones, in that space.

Lee Withers announced that her yard will be on the Friendswood Garden Tour in late April. If members want to volunteer to help greet visitors in her garden, BCMGA volunteer hours are available for that.

The Fruit Tree Sale in February was a success, with a net income of \$9003. Many thanks to all who helped make it a success. Also, if you would like to order fruit trees as part of the membership order, the April meeting is the deadline for submitting those orders. A plant list was distributed, or you can contact Gil Livanec or Barb Bruyere for information. These trees will arrive with the stock for next spring's sale, in February 2009.

News at the Demonstration Garden...

By Ray Michalik

Would you believe nearly a fourth of 2008 is nearly gone. My how time flies when you're having fun. Fun as in working the soil, planting, transplanting, propagating or pulling weeds. I think it's safe to say Spring is here. I hope so because I have my red potatoes, and tomatoes planted and will plant the rest of my veggies very soon.

We should thank Dan Sebesta for seeing to it that we will be harvesting citrus in a couple of years as he has planted peach, avocado and several varieties of citrus trees in the orchard at the training station, with Roy Morgan's help. He still has room for several more trees.

Rich's rain harvesting system is coming along nicely. The two 2500 gal. drums are full as we have gotten quite a bit of rain since they've been installed and the leaks have been repaired. L. D. Lewis has the distribution pump set and hooked up to the drums. There needs to be a small amount of electrical work to be completed to the pump and low level shut off switch for the pump. That work should be completed very soon. The next major undertaking to be tackled is to connect the discharge of the pump to the water distribution lines and installing all irrigation lines. This will take some careful planning and quite a bit of labor but it will get done in time.

The vegetable garden is coming along nicely with some winter veggies still producing/ growing and some spring seeds/transplants being planted or set out. The plot is fairly well workable since the plot has been elevated and the drainage improved.

Our work days are still Tue. and Fri.. There are several interns participating regularly and are enjoying it. Come on out and have a cup of coffee and maybe pull a weed or two if you're free. You never know it could become addictive.

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!



By Paula Craig

September 15-19, 2008 Master Gardener Specialist Entomology Training - Austin, TX

Hosted by Wizzie Brown, Extension Program Specialist, Travis County

- Registration fee of \$300.00 includes collecting kit with lots of goodies; lectures; Extension bulletins; 3 lunches, 1 dinner, snacks & drinks
- Transportation and lodging is on your own
- Course is limited to 20 applicants; deadline is July 18, 2008

Contact Wizzie Brown at ebrown@ag.tamu.edu or 512.854.9600 with any questions.

The Organic Gardener...

By Ellen Pedisich

I smile every time I dig into the organic garden because I see earthworms, champion decomposers. They are fertilizing the soil for me.

Thanks to you who have given me seeds, plants, leaves, plant trimmings, and coffee grounds for the garden and compost piles. I appreciate your enthusiasm to go "green".

I volunteered to take care of five rose bushes in Paula's garden. After hours of weeding, my new friend from the new class helped me put mulch around them. Now the bushes seem to be smiling at us. they look good.

Here's my haiku:

Pansies, daylilies,
dianthus, and marigolds,
edible flowers.

February's Weather from the Education Station...

By Ted Jagen

Temp.: High = 81.9 deg. on the 24th, Low = 32.8 deg. on the 1st

Mean = 60.4 deg., Normal = 56 deg.

Wind: Max. = 31 mph (ESE) on the 16th

Chill Hours (season to date): 364.5 hrs

Rain: Feb. = 2.60", Normal = 3.4"

Year = 11.67", Normal = 6.3"

The Inquiring Gardner...

By Ann McLain

It's a busy time in our gardens this month. I'm referring to our mutual gardens, the Education Station, where things are at a fever pitch just now. But I'm also thinking of my own personal garden, which has not been busy enough so far this spring. After a fall and winter of kicking, for what at the time seemed to be perfectly valid reasons, I'm finding I need a jump start this spring. Sitting peacefully in the sun on the porch, after so many weeks of gloom, is just too luxurious to pass up

At the Education Station we are all very busy, verging on panic mode, as the springtime events march on through. One big sale has been accomplished, as well as the first open house of the year. A second open house is coming shortly (March 29), with the big event right on its heels – the Spring Plant Sale on April 19. We've been propagating and potting on and buying, and we're going through pots and

soil at a terrific pace. This spring's new class of interns is nearing the end of formal classes, so we are welcoming the new folks to our routines. Plus, all of this usual chaos is further stirred up by our new What's Growin' On Garden Series on Saturdays. And, of course, our gardens here are just like the gardens we have at home, with a powerful need for us to weed and clean out the old and plant new. So the Education Station is a lively place these days.

In my own gardens at home, I'm just not being as busy as I should be, but the stuff in the garden is bustling right along, getting way ahead of me. Weeds, in particular. It always amazes me when, each year, stuff comes up that I've never seen before. It certainly confirms the concept of seed banks – the seed collection that persists in the soil for many years before germinating. Wind and rain and other forms of erosion such as tilling and digging holes bring these long buried seeds to the warmth and light at the surface, and – voila! – new, previously unknown weeds! It's marvelous. And annoying. I should get out there right now and pull each one of those unknowns up. But what is it really? Could it be those seeds I intentionally planted a few years ago that never germinated? Could it be a wildflower I haven't seen before? My curiosity makes it hard to do what I know I need to do.

The birds are busy around our place, too. Mr. and Mrs. Wren, after getting off to an early start at throwing their tiny weight and big voices around, have selected their current nest site. Last fall Neal made the end pieces of a new raised bed and hung them over a privacy fence by the back deck. The combination of the hanging wood and the crosspieces of the fence itself have created a cozy shelter. At first the wrens were sharing it with two green anoles and a skink, but now wrens rule. Little eggs are accumulating in Mrs. Wren's freeform nest. At least this year she's doing it outside, rather than on the shelf over the washer in the garage. That was inconvenient. We couldn't close the garage door until dark, and we had to remember to open a door as soon as we got up, so that the little parents could get down to the daily grind of providing bugs to their growing children. Loading the washing machine was nerve-wracking for all concerned.

And how 'bout those fire ants? The ants have solved the problems of our long wet winter by moving wholesale onto every bit of high ground around. Everyone who's tending a raised bed at the Education Station has had a close encounter these past few weeks. There seems to be no solution in sight for this. If only I could train them to eat the grasshoppers and caterpillars, which also have gotten off to a fast start this spring.

I don't know about you, but I was going stir crazy during that long wet January. Now whenever I go out the front door, I see some nice pale yellow freesias, and the sweet smelling sweet peas, and the dianthus and twinspur blooming away. I also see all the January chores that didn't get done (too wet), and the February chores (too wet), and the March chores that haven't been done yet (too busy). How will I get it all taken care of? But somehow what should get done, does, and what doesn't usually turns out to have been not so important after all.

Garden Checklist for March

***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's
Barbara Ray March 4th**

March Care for Carnivorous Plant

It is time to start preparing your plants for Spring. Clip off all dead foliage. Especially important for sundews to prevent fungal infections. Some species of *Sarracenia* require clipping off all leaves. This is perfectly fine, they do recover quickly, but the Purple Pitchers (*Sarracenia purpurea*) and Parrot Pitchers (*Sarracenia psittacina*) require some photosynthesis because they are such slow growers. Only clip off those leaves that are damaged or have excessive brown spots.

This is the time to repot, remember to use the correct soil for each species. Also if you wish to propagate your rhizomes, now is the time to do so.

Nepenthes should begin to wake up with the gradual increase in day light hours. You can speed up the pitcher production by misting the plant with a solution of 1/4 teaspoon orchid fertilizer in 1 gallon of water. It is okay to do this until the plant's own pitchers open up and start capturing bugs on its own. - - - Happy Carnivoring!

by DiAnna Munson



2008 Events:

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:

My thanks to Beverly Straugham, Doraine Morgan, Evelyn Moon, Jan Foerster and Pam Peltier for all the great refreshments at the March meeting. Those signed up to bring refreshments to the April meeting are: Barbara Bruyere, BeBe Brown, Billy Heck and J. T. Smith. Donie

As of June 1, 2008, I will step into the administrative role of Associate Department Head and Project Leader for Extension Horticulture.

A new Extension Assistant will be hired to provide statewide coordination for the network of County Master Gardener programs. This position will likely be announced this week on greatjobs@tamu.edu.

In addition to coordination, a priority of the Extension Assistant position will be training new Master Gardeners. I will continue to provide presentations at Master Gardener trainings, although at a reduced number. I will also participate in the Master Gardener program through supervision and guidance to the Extension Assistant.

The Texas Master Gardener program has always been a County-administered program operating under a few state guidelines. This fundamental strength of the program will not change, nor will the commitment and support from the Extension Horticulture unit.

Sincerely,

Doug Welch

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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