



WHAT'S GROWIN' ON

MAY 2009

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ED BARRIOS, THE PREZ, SEZ

The weather has been great last month and everything is coming back to life, including the weeds. I'd like to recognize Jim Hillis again for the beautiful pergola he designed and built with help from Billy Heck. It is a wonderful addition to the entrance of the gardens (see page 2).

We had a garden design meeting on April 14th and approved the following new gardens:

Funny Fruit Farm - Ann McLain will design and plant tropical fruits east of the Tropical Garden

Salvia - Al Fedoruk will replant the bed in front of the new pergola with various salvias

Sensory - Jennifer Northrop will design and plant a garden for children with autism, people with learning disabilities, memory problems or other health problems which benefit from horticultural therapy on the east side of the EarthKind® Rose bed

Native Grass and Woody Bed - Lee Withers will design this bed to the west of the Herb Garden.

I'll send complete notes from that meeting for everyone to see the other changes that were approved. In the future if you want to adopt a bed or put a bed up for adoption you'll need to contact the design committee to schedule a meeting. Also, all members who manage current beds will be asked to provide drawings and themes for their beds, and review any future changes with the committee. By the time you read this you should have received complete minutes of that meeting with the names of the 11 members on the committee.

Finally we will need lots of help with the garden sale on May 2nd. I really look forward to these events. It's great to see so many of the public excited about what they are buying, and so many of our members helping out.

Happy Gardening!

COMING UP

- ⇒ **SPRING PLANT SALE**
Sat, 05/02/09
8:00 am—1:00 pm, BEES
- ⇒ **FREE MAY GARDEN SERIES**
Sat, 05/09/09
9:00 am — noon, BEES
"The Fragrant Garden"
- ⇒ **BCMGA BOARD MEETING**
Tues, 05/12/09
5:30 pm AgriLIFE Office
All members welcome!
- ⇒ **BCMGA MEETING**
Tues, 05/12/09
6:30 pm AgriLIFE Office
Graduation of Interns
Viticulture (Grapes)
Fritz Westover (Harris County
Extension Associate)
- ⇒ **FREE MAY GARDEN SERIES**
Sat, 05/16/09
9:00 am — noon, BEES
"Water: Too Much or Too Little"
- ⇒ **FREE MAY GARDEN SERIES**
Sat, 05/23/09
9:00 am — noon, BEES
"Tropical Giants"
- ⇒ **FREE MAY GARDEN SERIES**
Sat, 05/29/09
9:00 am — noon, BEES
"Cool Plants"

PAULA CRAIG'S AGRILIFE: WHAT'S THIS?

This appeared 2-3 weeks ago on a 3-year-old Tecoma stans 'Gold Bells'. It looked like a fungus, with substantial thickening and hardening of younger stems and leaves — even some flower buds have been engulfed. Leaves eventually fall, but distorted stems continue to grow and flower normally past the point

of the excrescence. It must not interfere with the stem's nutrient passage even though the stems' cells are abnormally increased in number.

On closer inspection, there appears to be light tan tiny maggoty critters, so the brown is probably the frass, and not a fungus.

Tecoma stans is a Texas SuperStar™ with no reported pests or diseases! Oops....

If anyone has seen a similar attack on any Tecoma or plant in the Bignoniaceae family (e.g. Trumpet Vine, Bower Vine, Jacaranda, Cape Honeysuckle, Cross-Vine, Catalpa, China Doll—see list at <http://tinyurl.com/bignoniaceae>), let me know. Is this another gift from Ike?



DISTORTED STEM

Notice normal growth to the left

UNDERSIDE of LEAF →

Damage begins with smaller spots on leaves. This is more advanced attack.



THE CULPRITS

Compared to regular sewing pin head. They're the 4 light tan maggots circled in black. They move by "inching" along.



THE BEES BUZZ

CONSTRUCTION NEWS

So what's that red thing that has sprouted up at the end of the shade house? Keep reading to find out more.

Arbor

Remember the arbor by the entry drive? The one covered by a rampant growth of Evergreen wisteria and Rangoon creeper? Maybe you didn't realize there was an arbor in there.



This was one of the older garden structures at BEES. It was built in the early years of BCMGA's tenure on the property. According to stories told by our late president, Barbara Ross, the arching cattle panel across the top was put up in a show of acrobatic daring, resulting in some of those early members making a quick trip to the ground. Once put up, however, it carried the heavy load of too much wisteria and creeper, at least until Hurricane Ike came through. Ike's winds whipped the structure around enough to collapse that problematic cattle panel top.

Several of our hard working master gardeners

took on the problem of making this area presentable again. Early this spring they cut the vines to the ground and dismantled all of the old structure. This generated a mountain of debris, which had to be cleared away. Jim Hillis, an intern graduating this May, had built a sizeable pergola at a previous home in Tennessee. He hunted up his plans and tweaked them a bit to fit the site. He was joined in this project by Les Cooper, an intern from the newest class, and by the indispensable Billy Heck. Occasional straw-bossing was offered by Rich Tillman.



The new arbor was put together with large dimensional treated pine, which looks properly stately. The finial caps are copper. The crew decided that the structure would be even more stately if the copper had the patina of age. It turns out that liquid plant fertilizer will do that to copper, so the finials were painted with the blue stuff. Some expected instant results, which didn't quite happen, but within a week or two, we had a properly distinguished structure. Better enjoy it now, the vines are growing again.

Tori

As for that red construction, that's a Japanese tori, or gate. Beverly Straughan is putting in a Japanese-themed tranquility garden between the



two shade houses, and she wanted something to mark her space. She turned to Billy Heck, who turned out a very Japanese looking tori in no time. Wooden fences have joined the tori, along with some planting areas and a bench. A fountain is coming. Watch this small garden for developments.

Shade House

Did you notice what I said - "two shade houses"? The second is not quite completed, but it's definitely under way. Upright pipes have been set, overhead pipes have been bent, and we should have another useful shade house soon.



MORE BUZZ

WHAT A BEES-TLY WINTER!

Ted Jagen compiled a first quarter summary from the BEES weather station. He's included November 25 to March 31 chill hours and freeze hours.

	January	February	March
High Temp	80.3°	80.2°	80.0°
Low Temp	28.1°	30.6°	32.4°
Mean Temp	54.3°	61.1°	62.2°
Normal Temp	53.3°	56.4°	62.9°
Max Wind (mph)	31 S	34 ESE	31 ESE
Avg Wind (mph)	3.4	4.5	4.7
Rain	.34"	.36"	1.50"
Normal Rain	4.76"	3.50"	3.76"

*Chill Hours (# of hours below 45°)

11/25/08—03/31/09 = **499**

Freeze Hours (# of hours below 32°)

11/25/08—03/31/09 = **30.5**

Rainfall 01/01/09—03/31/09

9.82" BELOW normal

*Chill hours determine the suitability in Brazoria of fruit varieties. This season is running about 100 chill hours above normal for Angleton.



BEES MISSION
(Approved by BCMGA Board)

- B** BE AWARE OF OUR ENVIRONMENT
- E** ENDEAVOR TO PROTECT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES
- E** EDUCATE OUR COMMUNITY
- S** SERVE AS STEWARDS OF THE EARTH

WEED OF THE MONTH BY PAULA CRAIG: NUTGRASS

Disclaimer: Information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by AgriLIFE Extension or BCMGA is implied

THE BATTLE OF THE BULB

As Lee Withers expressed in last month's newsletter, nutgrass is a mother of a weed. In fact, this reproductive wonder is the OctoMom of the weed world. "Often considered" to be the world's WORST WEED, *Cyperus rotundus*, purple nutsedge, occurs as a weed in 100 countries, and was picked as the worst weed in the book *The World's Worst Weeds*, Holm et al., 1977.

And recent rains have triggered a procreating frenzy. The battle of the bulb has begun.

The Ticking Time Bomb

- ☞ Nutgrass is not a grass but a member of the sedge family. Its proper name is nutsedge. There are two species in this area, *Cyperus esculentus* (yellow nutsedge) and *Cyperus rotundus* (purple nutsedge). As early as the 1st century A.D. historians made note of this cropland weed. The African native and cousin to papyrus is now an invasive species worldwide.
- ☞ The *Journal of Environmental Quality* reports that increased atmospheric CO₂ levels may encourage the spread of this invasive species.
- ☞ Nutsedge's primary means of reproduction is vegetative. Tubers contain up to 7 buds. Pull one and another pops up.
- ☞ Nutsedge tubers are covered with a substance that prevents sprouting during the dry season. When the spring rains come, the substance is washed off and the tubers sprout.
- ☞ Nutsedge tubers are produced on rhizomes that grow to a depth of about 12 inches. A study in Hawaii found them at a depth of 18". In addition, the existing tubers form side tubers which, if left unchecked, will go forth and multiply next season.
- ☞ When a nutsedge shoot reaches the surface it forms a basal bulb, from which grow roots and more rhizomes with (oh, goody) new tubers at their ends.
- ☞ In one year one tuber has the mathematical potential to produce 1,900 new plants and 7,000 new tubers. Kablam!

How to Fight Back

Many methods of control have been tested including herbicides, solarization, tillage, weed cloth and mulch. None is 100% effective by itself, especially if the treatment is applied only once. Take a look at the EarthKind trial bed. Nutsedge practically laughs out loud at the heavy black plastic and extra thick weed barriers. Only diligent scouting and persistent extermination will control nutsedge populations. Get them while they're young.

Skip Richter of Travis County Extension recommends starving, burning, poisoning and depriving the young pests of light.

- ☞ Starve and kill them by removing nutsedge plants before they have 5 or 6 leaves or twice a month so that new side tubers do not have time to form.
- ☞ Burn babies by repeatedly spading or tilling tubers to the soil surface where they will languish in the summer sun.
- ☞ Poison the leaves repeatedly with herbicides. Eventually the plants will run out of reserves and die. Spot treatment with Round-Up (or other glyphosate) or natural killers Scythe and Quik Weed Killer. SledgeHammer and Image are labeled for use in lawns. Again, for maximum effectiveness, get them while they're young.
- ☞ Light deprivation is achieved by LOOSELY covering large infestations with weed fabric. The fabric must be loose so that plants cannot pierce their way through to the light. It takes about a year, but plants will eventually starve to death.

NUTSEDGE CHARACTERISTICS

	Purple Nutsedge	Yellow Nutsedge
Leaf color	dark green	pale or light green
Leaf tip	abruptly tapers to sharp tip	gradually tapers to sharp needle-like tip
Rhizomes	wiry, scaly	weak, thread-like
Tubers	oblong, coarsely hairy; several along each rhizome	spherical, smooth; one at end of each rhizome
Tuber taste	bitter	sweet
Seed head color	reddish to purplish-brown	yellow



THE UNDERGROUND: 'NATURE'S PLOUGH' PART 2

Keep the Worms Turning

Make sure our garden practices maintain robust populations of "nature's plough". The authors of *Gardening in the Humid South* suggest a benchmark of no fewer than 5-7 earthworms in a shovelful of soil.

Provide Food and Moisture Compost is perfect food. But even without an official compost pile, you can provide a constant food supply by "sheet composting": chop up undiseased soft plant prunings, let leaves lie (or shred them for faster action), dry out annual weeds (before they seed) and St. Augustine stolons. Put the combination under shrubs, around plants or in an unused area, add some alfalfa pellets from the feed store for nitrogen, cover it all with a layer of good organic mulch and keep it moist. In this climate, sheet composting is at least a twice-a-year activity. At any time, purée veggie food scraps, then water them into the soil. Like Goldilocks, they like moisture just right... too dry, they die or tunnel down; too wet, they surface to find oxygen where sun and predators can kill them.

Reduce Pesticide/Fungicide/Herbicide/Fast Acting Chemical Fertilizer Use Although earthworm species vary in their sensitivity to chemicals, or particular chemicals, all exhibit reduced populations with the chemicals regularly applied in agriculture. Fast acting chemical fertilizers seem to cause an avoidance reaction; earthworms move out of the fertilized area.

Reduce Excessive Tilling A single tilling a year has little effect on populations. Multiple tillings dramatically decrease earthworms. There is no single factor that accounts for the reduction: it's probably a combination of outright death by plow, change in the soil structure, tunnel destruction, drying out the food supply, and possibly burying earthworm eggs too deep in the soil to hatch.

As the Worm Turns

For a creature without a brain, it's pretty fascinating (at least to worm lovers).

Species The most common species of earthworms number about 1800 (and counting). There is no site or source that lists Texas earthworm species. A number of websites erroneously report that there are no native earthworms in the U.S. because the last glacial episode wiped them out. Well, that's true in the north, but the glaciers didn't get to Texas. While there are undoubtedly introduced worms, we do have native species. Other states have made comprehensive surveys, but it seems Texas lags behind.

Adaptation Superbly adapted to life underground, it's an eating machine with a gizzard, a distributed nervous system that detects vibrations and light, an outer mucous membrane to slip through gritty soil but with tiny bristles on that membrane to give a good grip on tunnel walls (ever watched a robin try to pull one out?); and muscular bands that allow it both forward and backward movement.

Specialization Earthworms fall into three categories depending on where they live in the soil. In the topmost layer of soil and in debris are those worms that munch almost raw materials - they include the little red worms sold for home vermicomposters. Slightly deeper, the garden variety earthworm ingests partially decayed material and makes transient tunnels that are more horizontal than vertical. The deepest tunneling earthworms, such as the northern nightcrawlers, make vertical tunnels with a typical exit hole visible on the soil surface.

Longevity The average lifespan for an earthworm is 2 years, although in ideal environments they may survive up to 10 years. To help that longevity, immediately cover up with moist soil any worm that you unearth while digging in the garden. Sunlight sends them into almost immediate shock and paralysis.

Regeneration It's only partly true that an earthworm can regenerate itself after being sliced. It depends on the species and where the cut occurs. Best not to assume that you can increase the earthworm population by slicing them in pieces.

Reproduction Having one of the most unique reproductive systems among any animal, earthworms are hermaphrodites (having both eggs and sperm), but mate with another worm to exchange sperm during a night tryst on the soil surface. A mucous band on the clitellum (the lighter "collar") slides forward as the worm backs up. As the sheath slides forward it picks up some eggs and a packet of the other worm's sperm. When free of the worm, an amber colored sac about the size of a rice grain holds an average of 4 fertilized eggs and nutrients. The eggs hatch live little wigglers. In Brazoria, the first hatchlings came out in early March. Reproduction continues throughout the mild seasons.

References

Edwards, Clive Arthur. *Earthworm Ecology*, 2nd Edition. 2004. CRC Press
Government of Canada: <http://www.plantwatch.ca/english/wormwatch>

The Worm Digest <http://www.wormdigest.org>
University of Florida Extension: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/IN047>

NOT EARTHWORMS!



← MILLIPEDE

1/2"-3" long; 2 legs/segment

In damp areas; both larvae and adults primarily eat decaying vegetation (good), but sometimes seedlings (not so good)



← MEALWORM

Larva of Darkling Beetle; up to 1-1/2". Both adults and larvae scavenge decaying organics in damp places. Great in compost or soil, very bad where grains stored. Food source for insectivores.



← WIREWORM

Larva of Click Beetle. Yellow to brown; up to 1-1/2". In soil. Very damaging to veggie crops.

NOW READ THIS

The Lazy Gardener's Guide, Smith, Brenda Beust. River Bend Co. 1997, 72 pp (out of print)

Now available on CD only from: Brenda B. Smith, Lazy Gardener on CD, 14011 Greenranch, Houston, TX 77039-2103, \$20

Reviewer: Carole Wenny

When asked to do a book review of one of my favorite books, I was in a quandary (wherever that is). Do I choose my favorite wildflower book, perennial book.....you get the picture. After thinking about it for a while, I picked *The Lazy Gardener's Guide* by Brenda Beust Smith. Back in 1997 I took a "sick" day from work to hear her speak at the Freeport Library, became a believer, and bought her book.

Brenda calls her book the "month-by-month when to do what in upper gulf coast gardens" and provides tips for what we really need to do, what to do if the spirit moves us, what to do if we're feeling energetic, and what we should not do for each month of the year. She

also includes a design for a specific type of garden with suggestions for appropriate plantings for every month. Tucked here and there are words of wisdom, quotes from her favorite garden variety poems and wording that reflects her unique sense of horticultural humor.

I must admit that I often find myself searching through the book's 72 pages to find out the things I should have done months ago, but it is a guide after all, and at times I'm a perfect example of the lazy gardener. Remember Brenda's motto and it will save you time and energy: "If a plant has an insect or disease problem, don't treat! Replace that plant with one that doesn't have insect or disease problems in your area!"

Until a few weeks ago, Brenda Beust Smith was a garden columnist for the *Houston Chronicle*. Although she no longer appears in the print edition of the paper, she maintains a lively and informative blog at <http://blogs.chron.com/lazygardener/>

LOOKING THAT GIFT PLANT IN THE MOUTH

Have you read the marvelous book, *Passalong Plants*, by Steve Bender and Felder Rushing? If you haven't, you need to borrow a copy and find out what all the laughing is about. It's a funny love letter to all the old-timey plants many of us grew up with. In this book, the authors define "passalong plants" by three criteria: one, they are old-fashioned; two, they are very easy to propagate; and three, they are seldom seen in garden centers and nurseries. So if you want these sentimental favorites, you need to find someone who's got them.

Gotta Have These

Many of the plants described in the book are indeed gems, things that most gardeners would be glad to get a piece of. If someone offers you a confederate rose, especially the big double white that turns to dark pink, snap it up. Or some Lycoris that have been growing in a local garden for decades, or the lovely white and blue walking iris. Or some bulbs of snowflakes, or a clump of the magenta summer phlox that actually survives here. Give them all a home - you'll be glad you did.

But Never These

Unfortunately, criterion two is where all the trouble comes in.

Some of these passalong plants don't wait to be propagated, they do it themselves, with great enthusiasm. And some common passalongs are things we can't afford to have getting loose in our remaining natural places. I doubt if any of us would willingly accept and plant a baby kudzu vine or a tallow tree sapling. But how about some Japanese honeysuckle? Or a ligustrum? The honeysuckle smells delicious, but it has transformed many acres of open land to impassable scrub, which is unusable to wildlife. The ligustrums are doing the same thing all over this region.

Maybe These...But, Maybe Not Other common passalong plants are not so much a biohazard as they are just awfully pushy to live with. In fact, some of these bully plants are actually native to our area, which is why they multiply and grow so happily in our gardens. Take the maypop, our native passionvine. Please take it, I don't want it in my yard. Maypop is enthusiastic, to say the least, popping up from wandering roots as far away from the parent plant as twenty feet. If you can live with that, it's the host plant for Gulf fritillary caterpillars.

And then there's horsetail, which

looks wonderfully primitive. Some garden writers suggest putting a barrier several inches deep around horsetail plantings to prevent its escape. However, I've watched it go under, over, or around such a metal barrier many times in the Tropical Garden; maybe it would be okay in a big pot with no drainage holes.

Many gardeners consider obedient plant (often known as disobedient plant around here) to be a bully. I admit that its yearning to run free does make it a problem in an organized garden, but I really like it and I'm willing to pull all the surplus (and dispose of it - this is the important part). Others may say the same about sword fern or ruellia or hardy begonia. The most important part of the contract between me and the obedient plant is that I know it's a bully, and I am prepared to deal with it.

There's nothing I like better than a cool new (or old) plant passed along in my direction. But I have come to the conclusion that all prospective recipients need to ask themselves "Why is my friend/relative/neighbor giving this plant away?" Don't let yourself fall victim to a bully plant, even if it's free.

Think-Twice Plants

It all depends on your personal taste, soil type and moisture, acreage or lack thereof, and the time you have to keep plants in check, but here are plants known to run, seed, layer, leap...

- *Hardy ageratum
- *Horsetail
- *Maypop
- *Obedient plant
- 'Margarita' Sweet Potato
- Air Potato Vine
- Arrowhead Vine
- Blue Dawn Flower Vine
- Cashmere Bouquet
- +Common Elephant Ears
- Crocasmia 'Lucifer'
- Four O'Clocks
- Golden Rain Tree
- Liriope spicata (not the clumper)
- Peruvian (Parrot) Lily species
- Root Beer Plant
- Ruellia tall species
- (Dwarf are TX Superstars™)
- Running bamboos
- Sword fern
- Widelia
- +Yellow Iris
- *=Native
- +=Seen in wetlands/bayous

Kill-Em-Quick Plants

- Chinese Tallow Tree
- Japanese Honeysuckle
- Water Hyacinth
- Ligustrum

ANN MCLAIN, THE INQUIRING GARDENER: THE BERRY PATCH



If you like looking at baby fruits, this is a good time to visit our Berry Patch. Cute little grapes and blackberries are popping out all over. The berry area was begun in 2007 by **Roy Morgan**. Roy worried about the leftover blackberry roots that were sitting around in the headhouse after our first fruit tree sale. So he gathered them up and made them a bed out behind the cement block barn. This initial planting was mostly 'Ouachita', plus a few 'Rosborough'.

Blackberries

Roy and the blackberries have been learning together. Roy installed a lattice work of cattle panel to train the canes onto, and this seems to have worked well and keeps the bushes looking neat. He says that with his new blackberries he will make the support system shorter, though, so that the berries aren't way overhead. Blackberries bear fruit on canes that are in their second year of growth; when the canes have fruited, they are cut down, since they will not fruit again.

Each blackberry variety has its fans. Roy points out that 'Ouachita', which is thornless, is a whole lot more pleasant to train to its trellis than 'Rosborough', which is well-

armed. The new varieties he has put in this spring are 'Brisson' and 'Kiowa', which is known for its huge berries. Both are thorny.

So far this spring the 'Ouachita' is growing slowly. 'Rosborough', on the other hand, has shot up and out, and has been covered with big white flowers.



Now it's carrying a nice load of green fruit (some almost pink). I'm watching them.

Grapes

Roy also planted grapes that first spring. Those of you who know about Roy's interest in wines might not be surprised to hear that. Grapes are not really recommended for Brazoria County, but Roy likes a challenge. The varieties he planted were 'Flame', a seedless table grape, and 'Lomanto' and 'Schrunk'. 'Flame' turned out to be a bust, and only one 'Schrunk' survives. But the 'Lomanto' vines grew pretty well and produced grapes last year.

We were all pretty excited about that. And they did taste pretty good. But the fruits were excessively seedy, giving me a whole new view of that breakfast cereal my grandparents liked so much.



This spring the 'Lomanto' vines have a big crop of teensy grapes, but a harvestable crop is still quite a way in the future. Even the 'Schrunk' vine, despite looking rather poorly, has set some fruit. Last year Roy made the 'Lomanto' grapes into crunchy high-fiber raisins. This year, he says they're going to be jelly or wine.

Blueberries

Roy has launched a new experiment this spring. We don't grow blueberries in Brazoria County, so Roy is trying them. Blueberries require acidic soil, at pH 4.0 to 6.0, which we don't have; and they also require moist soil but very good drainage. In other words, the acidic sandy soils of East Texas suit them just fine. So Roy decided to recreate a little East Texas right here in the berry patch. He got some really big nursery tubs (25 gallons) and filled them up with a



mixture of peat moss and pine compost. Then he buried the tubs in trenches filled with pine bark mulch. Voila! East Texas! Or so he hopes.

The blueberries are planted out as a proper trial garden. Roy ordered three plants each of three different varieties. Each subsection of the

garden has one of each of the varieties. It's very important for any of us tempted by blueberries here in Brazoria County to choose southern highbush, sometimes called rabbiteye, varieties. Roy chose 'Climax', 'Tiftblue', and 'Alapaha' - all recommended for southern growers.

After the blueberries were planted, Roy started wondering about the pH of our water. Rainwater, and most well water, has a pH in the basic range, perhaps at around 8.0. Continued irrigation with this alkaline water can raise the pH of the soil, converting the blueberry's happy acidic home to a nasty basic one. This also is a potential problem for gardeners trying to grow healthy azaleas or camellias. Folks with city water probably don't have to worry about this, because the chemistry of water chlorination and distribution results in city water with a pretty neutral pH. But Roy has been looking into ways to keep his blueberry beds acidic.



More to Test

So what's next for the Berry Patch? Well, one thing to watch for next year is blueberries, or so we all hope. Several of the new plants did bloom after planting, but no fruit has appeared. But they all look pretty healthy and happy, so prospects are good for next spring. And Roy is planning on some more experiments for 2010. For instance, even though Alvin has a Strawberry Festival, strawberries don't seem to feature in backyards in Brazoria County. So obviously, we need some in the Berry Patch. And how about raspberries? Experts say they won't grow and fruit here; Roy wants to know why. And I'm not betting against him.

PLANTS OF THE MONTH

PALM: *Arenga engleri* (Dwarf Sugar Palm, Formosa Palm)

Size: 10'-15' H x up to 16' W if suckers aren't removed

Shape: Clumping, upright but arching

Light: Filtered to part sun

Soil/Water: Average/moist

Flowers: Monocarpic; orange, fragrant

Fruit: Small red to purple; toxic

Fertilize: Palm fertilizer

Propagation: Fresh seeds best; by suckers, but may be slow to establish



Photo courtesy of Floridata ©2004
<http://www.floridata.com>

CHOICE BUT UNDERUSED!

Commonly described as one of the finest landscape palms for warm temperate and sub-tropical zones, it's hardier than the related Sugar Palm that's struggling in the BEES Tropical Garden.

8' long stiff, but arching, pinnate fronds on long thornless petioles carry olive green leaflets with silvery undersides. The jagged and notched edges and tips are similar to the Fishtail Palm. A fine black fiber netting covers the upper part of the 6' tall trunks.

Although it's monocarpic (the flowering stem blooms once, then dies), the oldest stems take 10 years to bloom and up to two years to die. The younger suckers continue to mature.

Some experts suggest cutting out some of the suckers to better show off the trunks.

This is a truly lovely and unique palm that's not commonly available in this area. Seeds online; Horticultural Consultants, Houston, has large plants.

NATIVE: *Rivina humilis* (Pigeonberry)

Size: 12"-18" x 3'

Shape: Fairly dense groundcover if grown well

Light: Filtered sun to shade

Soil/Water: Average/Wet or dry

Flowers: $\frac{1}{4}$ " pale pink in 2"-3" spikes held above foliage

Fruit: Translucent red berries; toxic to humans, but not to birds

Fertilize: Average

Propagation: Seeds; stem cuttings?

FLOWERS/FRUITS TOGETHER

When first planted, pigeonberry is an unassuming understory semi-deciduous to evergreen plant. Indeed, it's quite straggly and you'll wonder why you bothered. Don't give up though!

It takes a season or two for the 2"-3" wavy leaves to start filling in, and the plant to constantly pump out flowers and berries at the same time. During cold weather, the leaves take on a lovely purplish color and flowering ceases.

Moist soil is preferred, but it will take wetter soils; drought causes dormancy. As it's salt-tolerant it can be used in seaside plantings.

One Texas grower suggests that pigeonberry will take full sun... worth a test perhaps.

Native to the southernmost U.S. (including Brazoria) through the Caribbean basin and into South America, it's considered an invasive outside the Americas.

Some local nurseries carry it.



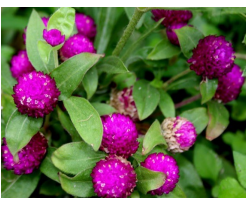
ANNUAL: *Gomphrena globosa* (Globe Amaranth)



'Fireworks'



'QIS' Mix



Size: 9"-36" x 12"-24" (height/width depends on cultivar)

Shape: Rounded, bushy

Light: Full sun

Soil/Water: Well-drained/average

Flowers: Profuse clover-like bracts in shades of purple, pink or white; red in hybrid. Flowers are tiny.

Fertilize: Average

Propagation: Seeds

Drying Tips: Cut before flower heads are completely expanded. Planted tight, stems are longer.

TAKES HEAT & HUMIDITY

Old is new. It's an old-fashioned favorite that's a superb all summer annual. Newer cultivars offer intense colors and compact plants. Or choose taller varieties like 'Strawberry Fields', derived from the far west Texas *G. haageana*, or the brand new 'Fireworks'.

Except for root rot in excessively wet soils, the plant has no real disease or pest problems.

Although the flowers are tiny within the bracts, butterflies and bees feed on the nectar.

Besides the species (about 2'x1') varieties include:

Gnome Series (6"x12") pink, magenta, white and mix

Buddy, Cissy, Dolly (9"x12") screaming purple, white, rose respectively; also a Buddy Mix

Woodcreek (18"x18") 7 colors

Strawberry Fields (18"x12") red

QIS Series (3'x2') mix

Fireworks (3½'x1') open hot pink bracts w/yellow tips

'Buddy Purple' Photo courtesy of Hagen Friend & Dixie Friend Gay
Many gorgeous plant pix on <http://dixiefriendgay.blogspot.com/> May, 2008 archive

BCMGA

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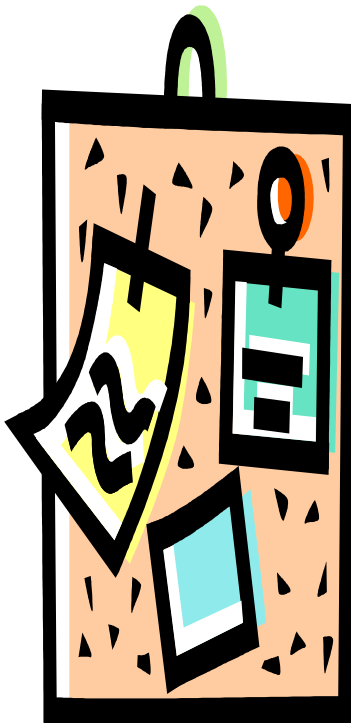


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ANNOUNCEMENTS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Volunteers Always Needed: B.E.E.S. (the gardens), every Tuesday and Friday, 7:30am–12:00pm

Brazosport Daylily Society Show and Plant Sale: Saturday, May 9, 1:00pm–4:30pm
Inside Brazos Mall in front of J.C. Penney, Lake Jackson

Lone Star Daylily Society Show and Plant Sale: Saturday, May 16, 10am–sellout
Alvin Senior Citizen's Building, 309 West Sealy, Alvin, TX
Additional information at <http://www.lonestardaylilyociety.org>

Lone Star and Space City Chapters American Hibiscus Society Shows & Plant Sales:
Saturday, May 16, 1:00pm–4:00pm
Nessler Center, Wings of Heritage Room
2010 5th Ave. North, Texas City, TX

Sunday, May 31, 1:00pm–4:00pm
E. Harris Co. Activity Center
7340 Spencer Highway, off Kyle Chapman Rd., Pasadena, TX

Sunday, June 7, 1:00pm–4:00pm
Bellaire Community Center
7008 S. Rice Ave., Bellaire, TX

Additional information at <http://www.lonestarahs.org>
Come early for best selection!

Ohio State University "Sick Plants and a Hungry World" On-Line Non-Credit Course: 10 weeks, Self-Paced, \$35
This non-credit course is completely online and has 10 modules that link plant diseases and culture change, with topics ranging from basic concepts in plant disease to prehistoric man and plant diseases, and from the Irish Potato Famine to bioterrorism. The course is completely self-paced, so you can take it anytime, anywhere. Targeted to Master Gardeners. Information and registration at: <http://plantpath.osu.edu/extension/outreach/online/index.html>