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**READY, SET, GROW...COOL SEASON FLOWERS** BY ANN MCCLAIN

Now that our weather is moving toward cool and wet at last, it's time to think a bit about providing our flower beds with some cool season interest. Although many of our favorite flowering plants will continue to produce right through the winter, others are disappearing or settling into a resting state. What can we do to have a new interest for winter and some early spring appeal?

In the temperate world, the ultimate sign of spring is the narcissus, also called daffodil or jonquil. For us, the paperwhite narcissus pops up and into bloom so early that we should properly consider it a sign of winter, although, surely, with a promise of spring to come.

**Narcissus** is a huge genus, so big that it has been broken up into eleven subdivisions. Some of these subgroups won't grow well here. Unfortunately, among those is the big, flashy trumpet division, which I grew up calling daffodils. These have a very large trumpet arising from the saucer of the perianth petals, and each stem has one flower. Picture the yellow daffodil printed on

Easter cards and spring wrapping paper, and you have the classic variety called 'King Alfred'. Enjoy the pictures - it isn't likely to appear in your garden.

On the other hand, we have the classic southern narcissus, called 'Campernelle'. It appears to be a hybrid of *Narcissus odorus*, with two to four bell-like flowers per stem, sweetly scented, as the species name would suggest.



Several books claim that it happily tolerates heavy, wet clay. One source mentions a jonquil cultivar, 'Trevithian', as a good substitute for it, although it's not clear if it is as tough.

Varieties from the division Tazetta are our best bets for Brazoria County. These are the paperwhites, plus some close relatives. What all of these varieties have in common is that each bloom stem carries a cluster of flowers. The flowers have a short stubby corona sitting on a perianth or saucer.

Some of these varieties have long been on the

scene here, naturalizing easily and persisting even after the house they once surrounded is gone. One old variety especially recommended by TAMU's Dr. Welch is 'Grand Primo', with clusters of cream and yellow flowers. At the Houston Garden Club's Annual Bulb Mart, most of the varieties offered are Tazettas.

Of course, Houston's growing conditions are not ours, but the Bulb Mart's list is a good place to start if you want to experiment with *Narcissus*. Consider these as annuals, and you may be pleasantly surprised. Some varieties:

'Grand Soleil d'Or' - an old variety, with deep yellow saucers and orange-red coronas.

'Inball' - white coronas and saucers. Supposedly the fragrance is less musky than the older varieties, and the stems are shorter.

'Ziva' - white saucers with gold coronas.

'Erlicheer' - a double flowered form; white saucers and creamy yellow coronas. Really pretty.

And take a chance, try these "miniature" narcissus from the jonquil division:

'Minnow' - two-toned yellow flowers on a short, ten-inch stem.

'Pipit' - saucer is yellow and the corona is yellow streaked with white; short plant.

'Trevithian' - golden yellow and fragrant. A sort of junior Campernelle.



Narcissus should be planted in October or November, preferably in well drained soil with good humus content. References say that both 'Campernelle' and 'Trevithian' tolerate wetness, but why not give them the best you can. Plant them 2" deep, which means with 2" of soil above the shoulder of the bulb. A layer of sand underneath is recommended, too. Good spacing is 6" apart. Fertilize after bloom, to increase the chances that they will return, and leave the foliage on until it turns brown.

Braiding or twisting the foliage to make it die faster defeats the whole purpose, which is to store up plenty of energy for next year. Narcissus prefer sun,

*(Continued on page 2)*

**COMING UP**

- ⇒ **FREE October Seminar**  
Sat, 10/10/09  
10:00 am—11:30 am,  
Lake Jackson Public Library  
"Fall Flowers in the Garden"
- ⇒ **BCMGA BOARD MEETING**  
Tues, 10/13/09  
5:30 pm AgriLIFE Office  
All members welcome!
- ⇒ **BCMGA MEETING**  
Tues, 10/13/09  
6:30 pm AgriLIFE Office
- ⇒ **FREE November Seminar**  
Wed, 11/04/09  
12:05 pm—12:50 pm,  
Lake Jackson Public Library  
"Winterize Veggie Gardens"
- ⇒ **FREE December Seminar**  
Wed, 11/04/09  
10:00 am—11:30 am,  
Lake Jackson Public Library  
"Holiday Plants"

## COOL SEASON FLOWERS (continued from page 1)

but they can tolerate a little bit of shade. Be careful where you put paperwhites - not everyone finds their powerful fragrance pleasant. If the bulbs do naturalize, you will need to dig and divide every four years, or else they will push themselves up out of the soil.

Another old-timey bulb for our cool season is the **snowflake** (*Leucojum aestivum*). Like the oldest paperwhite varieties, this is naturalized around many old home sites. The Latin name means "summer snowflake", and it



must bloom in summer somewhere. But here it will pop out its nodding little 1" white bells about the same time the narcissus ap-

pear, in January. There is a named variety not readily available called 'Gravetye Giant' that's not very different from the species. If you order bulbs, be sure that you are getting "aestivum"; there are other species, but this is the only one that can bloom in our mild winters.

**Snowflakes** should be planted in October or November, too. They would like to be in a semi-shady spot, and they tolerate dampness. Put them 2" deep, and 4" apart. They look especially good in clumps and drifts, although a small clump nodding in a corner by the walkway looks good, too.

If you decide to brighten your space with **freesias**, put them near your door or where you like to sit in the spring sun. All those bath and body type products are onto something - freesia smells good! The modern hybrid forms don't smell as wonderful as the old-fashioned ones, but they do grow more strongly and have larger flowers, in very lovely shades such as peach and rose and blue, often with white throats. The modern hybrids will be the most easily

acquired, but don't count on them to return next year. Some will, most won't. But they are gorgeous while they last. There are forms of freesia which are likely to stay with you awhile. One is the species *Freesia laxa* var *alba*, also known as *refracta*. The flowers on this species are said to be creamy white, and they are very fragrant. I was given a clump of what I think is this species, although to my eye it is more yellow than white. Its fresh looking foliage is green from October through May, and it blooms for about a month in spring.

**Freesias** should be planted after the weather cools, which probably means November for us. They should be set pointed end up, about 1" deep and 2" apart. Remember,

when you can't tell which end of a bulb is the top, plant it on its side.



Freesias prefer a cushion of sand under the bulb, and they want very well drained soil in full sun.

There is one more bulb that I like to plant. It's a bit pricey, especially since it absolutely will not return for a second year, but I just love the flowers. This is the **ranunculus**, or Persian buttercup. The modern varieties produce several stalks a foot or more tall, with deeply cut, lacy leaves. The flowers are double and present as balls of overlapping petals, and they come in many colors.



These are definitely annual for us - when the plant collapses, you will find no bulb

whatsoever...there's nothing at all.

The old fashioned rule of thumb for planting ranunculus is to put them out on Thanksgiving. Actually, it may be better to aim at early November, hoping to hurry growth along. These bulbs need to get into flower while it's still cool, because warm weather will melt them. The main thing is that the heat of summer must be over before you plant. Soak ranunculus bulbs for at least twelve hours in warm water. You can add a bit of root stimulator to the water. Then plant them with the gnarly "fingers" pointing down, in well drained soil and full sun. Plant them 1"-2" deep. You could space them out to come up through a ground cover, which would make a bigger show of a few bulbs. But if you're planting a mass of ranunculus, put them about 6" apart. Mark where you plant this one - the emerging foliage looks exactly like a weedy relative we all have (see page 4). You don't want to pull out your expensive bulb before it gets to the good part.

Now, having planted these bulbs, how about adding a nice annual groundcover to surround them and dress them up? I have a few suggestions here, too. One possibility would be to plant **dianthus**, in some complementary color. These can be perennial, of course, but they will suffer in the summer, so, unless they are something really special, you'll want to pull them out by the time the bulb tops have dried. The problem is that many easily bought dianthus come in colors that may not flatter the colors of the bulbs mentioned above.

**Pansies and violas** are another choice, and their colors are usually more in the same ranges as our bulb prospects. The whole pansy tribe does not like warm weather, so wait until things cool down before planting. November should be good. Traditionally, pansies/violas were thought to be for semi-shade, but most of the

new varieties tolerate pretty much full sun, as long as the temperatures are cool. Pansies have big faces, while violas are smaller and more dainty looking, although they are plenty tough.



Another good choice from the garden center is **sweet alyssum**. This occasionally decides that it is a perennial, and blooms right through the summer and on for another winter. It comes in white, and also in a range of pastel shades.



But, if you want those pastels, you'll have to get seeds and start them yourself - local garden centers have only white. Oh well. The white tends to be tougher, and more fragrant, anyway.

Lately, I have been trying another little sprawler. This is toad flax, or **linaria**. You will probably have to get seeds for this, although



some nurseries have it occasionally. It's easy from seed, if you have to go that way. It can grow to a wispy 12" or so, or it may just flop over, which is good, too. The flowers are like tiny, open-faced snapdragons, and they come in a lovely range of soft colors: pink, yellow, white, terra cotta, purple. It doesn't mind cold, but will crash when temperatures rise.

So clear out some spaces in your flower beds for winter color. Anywhere a ginger or canna or rudbeckia has died down for a rest there may be a hole crying to be filled. Let it be with color.

## THE BEES BUZZ

### 3rd QUARTER WEATHER

Did anyone else, besides the newsletter editor, have a water bill this summer that was higher than electric with A/C running non-stop?

As of September, the U.S. Drought Monitor still lists the county as D-2, "Severe Drought", even with the recent rains. The newest release of the U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook predicts improvement through the end of December. Let's hope the forecast pans out.

Alvin (near FM 1462 & Rosharon Road) KTXALVIN4				
	July	August	Sept	Year to Date
High Temp	100.6°	101.7°	96.6°	104.7°
Low Temp	72.1°	72.9°	66.6°	32.5°
Avg Temp	85.4°	84.6°	78.6°	73.5°
Historical Temp	82.0°	82.0°	78.0°	70.0°
Avg Humidity	54.8%	53.6%	58.5%	53.7%
Max Wind (mph)	26 NNW	25 NNW	16 N	35 N
Avg Wind (mph)	4.1	3.0	1.7	3.0
Rain	2.32"	2.44"	1.69"	24.19"
Historical Rain	5.30"	3.90"	6.80"	38.00"

Angleton (BEES-FM 523 & Hospital Drive) Compiled by Ted Jagen				
	July	August	Sept	Year to Date
High Temp	96.5°	98.0°	93.7°	99.4°
Low Temp	71.9°	70.5°	65.0°	28.1°
Avg Temp	85.7°	84.3°	77.8°	72.6°
Historical Temp	83.0°	82.8°	79.0°	71.4°
Avg Humidity				
Max Wind (mph)	33 S	27 SE	28 WNW	38 ESE
Avg Wind (mph)	1.7	1.8	2.1	3.3
Rain	1.36"	1.38"	4.30"	18.97"
Historical Rain	4.34"	4.83"	7.49"	43.96"

Lake Jackson (Willow Drive & Old Angleton Road) KTXCOLDS3				
	July	August	Sept	Year to Date
High Temp	96.6°	97.1°	92.8°	98.6°
Low Temp	71.4°	72.7°	66.3°	30.6°
Avg Temp	84.9°	84.7°	77.9°	73.1°
Historical Temp	84.0°	84.0°	80°	71.9°
Avg Humidity	79.7%	78.5%	85.5%	80.0%
Max Wind (mph)	18 WNW	6 NW	13 E	27 E
Avg Wind (mph)	1.2	.8	1.2	2.3
Rain	3.09"	2.40"	6.45"	20.10"
Historical Rain	5.90"	4.60"	8.10"	40.20"

*Caveat lector* (let the reader beware). These readings are for specific places. Given the random raindrops in the county, one mile away may have different precip readings. Also, these are all personal weather stations and may or may not adhere to National Weather Service standards.

Historical data is from U.S. State Department Country Studies for Alvin and Lake Jackson; and weatherbase.com for Angleton.

### TROPICAL GARDEN UPDATE

Submitted by: Carole Wenny

Whew...all the tropicals that had a tough winter, some killing back to the ground, did return with mild weather. Even the plumerias made it. Then, of course, some plants suffered from the prolonged tropical heat, and some plants suffered from the absent tropical rainfall. All in all, though, the gardens had something to display throughout the summer. The 'Raspberry Ice' Bougainvillea never stopped blooming and remains in a battle with the Brazilian Sky Flower (*Thunbergia grandiflora*) as to which can put out the longest 'arms'. However, the Purple Allamanda Vine, also known as Rubber Vine (*Cryptostegia grandiflora*) has them both beat. The plumbagos, durantas, and bauhinias had to be cut back to keep them in bounds. The crinum were more dependable than the cannas. The Crown of Thorns varieties we have didn't mind the dryness, so they bloomed sporadically.



Brazilian Sky Vine

Photo courtesy of <http://www.desert-tropicals.com>

The biggest disappointments were the gingers and the angel trumpets (*Brugmansias*). Most gingers never bloomed at all. Of the five brugmansias we have, only one, the yellow near the entrance to the gardens, just put out some blooms following the recent rains. We lost some hibiscus plants that were moved to make the pathways all 4-foot wide. The tri-color leaved hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*, unknown cultivar) rebelled by becoming bi-colored, the white leaf markings all but disappearing! The plumerias were less showy than usual, but we didn't fertilize because of the drought and plumerias are very heavy feeders, so lack of fertilizer may have made a difference.

Nothing bothered the bamboo varieties except maybe those of us who had to whack it back to keep it from covering everything. Thanks to all who helped in this endeavor. It is possible that the addition of edging and mulching all the beds made the gardens look so much better that people didn't notice the unhappy plants as much!



'Raspberry Ice' Bougainvillea  
Variegated leaves too — over-the-top color

## WINTER WEEDS

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

With cool season flowers come... cool season weeds. Yes, they're just beginning to pop up now and will reach a crescendo in early spring. Add a topping of mulch to flower and shrub beds to keep about 3" of mulch over bare ground. That will suppress germination of new weeds. If any seed into the mulch, or grow through the mulch, "weed" them out before they flower and set seed.

In lawns, TAMU turf specialist, Dr. Jim McAfee, recommends pre-emergent herbicides in very early autumn to control winter broad-leaved weeds. If weeds are already present in turf, use a post-emergent herbicide for the specific weeds you want to control. As always, READ THE LABEL to make sure the herbicide is both safe for the type of turf you have and effective on the weed(s) you want to kill.

The following represent just a few of the non-native winter weeds we're likely to see. For a rogue's gallery of many different weeds and their growing seasons, see <http://scsphotogallery.tamu.edu/gallery/JimMcAfeeWeeds?page=1>



**Why mulch?** Here's graphic proof...these appeared within the last week in an unmulched area. There are 7 different weeds in 1 sq. ft.!



**Common Chickweed**

And is it ever common! Makes a large mat of tiny leaves and weeny white flowers. Hard to believe that all those leaves come from a thread-like stem. Easy to weed out, but this annual's seeds will blow in from everywhere. Plan on having it every year. Don't mistake it for self-seeded sweet alyssum.



**Buttercup (Ranunculus spp)**

This is the one whose leaves look just like your expensive Ranunculus bulbs. Same genus, not same flowers!



**Bedstraw (various species)**

This annual is easy to identify. The sprawling stems have whorls of 5 to 8 leaves covered with fine velco — they'll stick to almost anything. Easy to uproot, but you'll be walking around with pieces of it attached to your clothing. It sets seeds after the tiny white flowers.



**White Clover**

Does anyone not recognize clover? As a perennial, the whole plant needs to come out, or it will continue to grow. Long rhizomes hold the plant tenaciously in the soil. The better the soil, the deeper the roots. Get it while it's young.



**False Dandelion** Young plant on left. Mature on right. There are several plants called "false dandelion" in this area. They all look rather like leaf lettuce when young. And they're prolific.



**Spiny Sowthistle**

No matter which of the 50 states you're in, spiny (or prickly) sowthistle will be with you. An introduced annual, it puts out a deep fleshy tap root, has prickly leaves with yellow flowers appearing in early spring. But don't let it go that long or the root might be a foot deep.

## OCTOBER JOB JAR—WHAT SHOULD WE DO THIS MONTH?

**Perennials & Summer Flowering Bulbs/**

**Rhizomes:** BeBe Brown, Brenda Gerstle, and Jo Ann Holt all agree that now is the time to be moving and dividing perennials. Brenda will be working on irises, shasta daisies, and some of her salvias. BeBe will be dividing clumps of ornamental grass, and planting lily bulbs (those little black balls that form in the leaf axils of tiger lilies.)

**Division** is just what it sounds like. Woody ornamentals (trees and shrubs) don't increase outward at the base (although they may sucker - but that's a different story). But herbaceous plants, those that don't make woody trunks, usually do grow outward as well as up. Some perennials may throw new shoots so vigorously to the sides that the centers die entirely, leaving a ring-shaped plant. The good part of this is that as the clumps get fatter, they can easily be divided to make new plants. When you replant the smaller pieces, they grow much more vigorously than if you had not done the dividing.

How you divide, and what tool you use, depends on the plant. But the basic idea is the same. A good place to start is to cut the clump in half; often we do this with a sharp, square ended spade. Garden knives, small saws, hand clippers, and fingers may all come into play. There's no "right size" for the divisions, except for this bottom line: each clump must have live roots and it must have at least one active shoot. Live roots are usually springy and flexible; dead roots are woody and stiff. Replant your divisions in the garden, or pot up extras to give away.

**Lawns:** Has the past year of drought left your lawn with expanses of dead grass? What should you do? Paula Craig says that your grass may not be really truly dead, but if it is, there may be several reasons why it happened. For many of us, watering the grass comes

dead last in the priority list, so drought certainly is one reason. Or, maybe we watered, but we did it in full afternoon sun and we cooked the grass. Secondary problems, such as cinch bugs, may have struck while the grass was stressed. Whatever the cause, it won't hurt to wait awhile to see if it will recover. The basic remedy would be to re-sod, but wait until spring for that. One reason is that sod producers had a bad summer, too, and available sod is likely to be stressed and of lower quality, or it may be higher priced to account for all the water it needed through the summer. Good reasons to wait.

**Roses:** Barbara Ray says that keeping your roses watered is the best thing you can do this month. Renew the mulch on the beds. You can, and should, cut out dead parts from the bushes, but don't deadhead or do any pruning into live wood. This might stimulate growth, which is not a good thing as the possibility of frost approaches. If you have been spraying (as for black spot), don't stop now.

**Veggies:** Debbie Soderman reminds us that October is still a good time to be planting root crops, such as carrots, beets, radishes, and turnips. It's also not too late to set out the kale family: cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts. If you do, remember to fertilize when you plant and again when fruiting starts. (She also reminds us that most of our gardens do not require phosphorus or potassium, so use a nitrogen only fertilizer.)

Ray Michalik's strategy in the vegetable garden is to harvest most of the fall veggies by January 1. This is so that he can be ready to plant his potatoes in late January. If this is your strategy, too, you need to take note that some cool season crops, such as Brussels sprouts, need 75 days from planting out until they start to bear. From October 1 to January 1 is only 92 days, so plan ahead if you're

planting the slow-growing crops. Put them where you won't have to pull them out just as they start to be useful.

**Hardy Woody Ornamentals:** Ann McLain says this is not the time to be transplanting any well-established shrubs or small trees - it's still too warm, and the stress of warm nights may kill the transplants. But if your garden plans call for this woody to be moved over there, here's something you can do now to prepare. **Root pruning** the transplant-to-be will help. With a sharp spade, cutting straight down, cut a circle around the base of the shrub (but do not cut under the root mass itself.) How big should the circle be? It should fall within the area you plan to include in the root ball you will dig. The rule for trees is for the circle to be maybe 7" out from a 1" diameter tree trunk. It's harder to give a guideline for multi-stemmed shrubs. You want to think about how big a root ball you can handle, and remember that the majority of the roots will be under the canopy of the plant.

In response to the root pruning, the shrub will grow new, tighter roots around its base to replace the extended roots you cut. The result will be less stress later when you sever the deeper roots under the root ball. Wait until December to dig out the root-pruned tree or shrub.

**Tropical Ornamentals:** Spring is the only time to think about transplanting anything that's not 100% hardy. However, if you have some in-ground tropicals (like hibiscus) that you'd like to pot protect in the winter you can root prune them now -- see Hardy Woody Ornamentals for the procedure -- and put them in pots when a freeze is predicted. The denser root ball formed over the next two months will assist the plant to survive in a pot as well as being much easier to move.

👍 👍 👍 👍 **NOW READ THIS**

**Garden Bulbs for the South.** 2nd Edition. Ogden, Scott. Timber Press: Portland. 2007, 396 pp, \$34.95

"Bulbs" is a bit of a misnomer, but *Garden Bulbs, Corms, Rhizomes, Tubers and Tuberous Roots for the South* would have been a mouthful. This is an indispensable reference for southern gardeners. The author covers almost every type of plant that stores food in below ground structures. The extensive plant entries make enjoyable reading.

In a different format than most encyclopedic references, plants are generally grouped by bloom season. This format makes it easier for the gardener to see what might bloom together. The drawback is that any plant has to be looked up in the index to find the page reference.

The narrative style offers history, how various Latin and common names came into use, the conditions of the plant's native habitat and growing tips. A goodly number of photos accompany the text.

Only one serious flaw mars the book's usefulness. There is no consistent synopsis of a plant's growing conditions. Only rarely does the author mention that a plant only grows on the coast, or not south of Dallas for instance. Experienced gardeners will know to ask others for personal experiences, but newer gardeners will have a harder time determining whether an unusual plant will grow in their gardens.

## ANN McLAIN, THE INQUIRING GARDENER: PLANT SALE PREPARATION

If it's October, it must be time to get ready for the Spring Plant Sale. The 2010 Spring Plant Sale will be April 24, and yes, that is six months away. But the time to start propagating healthy young plants is now. Actually, the propagating project began several months ago, but it's not too late to join in. As you take advantage of the better weather of fall to get your gardens ready for the cooler half of the year, please keep that plant sale in mind.

I talked to our plant sale coordinator, Cindy Goodrum, about how we get all the plants we offer at the sale. A lot of what we sell is material propagated from plants we grow at BEES. This is good marketing, because when potential buyers ask questions about the plant, we can take them to see the parent plant. Even when the parent plant isn't in bloom, it allows the customer to imagine how it will look in her own yard. This is a definite advantage over buying plants at the big box stores.

Some of our mother plants fling their seeds around generously, and the propagating crew has been busy digging up baby rubber vines ("purple allamanda"), *Cassias*, and *Pride of Barbados*. Other BEES favorites need a little help in germinating their seeds, and the crew has baby coral beans up and ready to grow. This spectacular tree was in full bloom near the greenhouse during this year's sale, and we could have sold dozens. Unfortunately, we had only a few seedlings. So we'll hope that this bumper crop continues to be healthy and grow well - their spectacular parent will help sell them all.

Now also is the time for starting cuttings from many of our shrubs. This is a particularly good time to take cuttings from hibiscus and althaea (rose of Sharon), and the propagation crew has been doing that. And even though this isn't rose pruning time, some of our

roses will be contributing a branch or two for cuttings as the weather cools a little. Rose cuttings rooted now may not fatten up in time for our 2010 sale, but they will be in good shape for 2011.

In addition to plants started right here in our potting shed, our plant sale also features interesting new things that we buy from nurseries. Cindy expects to be buying some "liners". This is a flat of around 70 plugs of very small baby plants. We will pot them on and fatten them up for sale. There's a limit to how many tender things we can carry through the winter in the greenhouse, so this strategy will be used only for very popular or very interesting items. She will also be buying some things in the spring to be used in creating the pre-planted containers we sell.

Cindy expects the greenhouse to be especially full this year, because she is planning to raise a lot of vegetable transplants for sale at the Fruit and Citrus Sale in February. Last year the vegetable babies filled a whole bench in the greenhouse, and they were all sold within 30 minutes. This year there will be more, lots more.

So what can you do to help get ready for the sale? To begin with, volunteer! If you are able to come to our regular work days (Tuesday and Friday mornings), you can join the propagating crew. If you don't know much about starting plants from various spare parts, this is a great way to learn while helping the group. Everyone pitches in to mix potting soil, take cuttings, and make labels. Plus, this is where a lot of interesting plants become available for adoption by those who help. Such a deal.

And you can contribute plant material! While you are cleaning up your beds at home you may find seed pods or volunteer seedlings. If you're dividing perennials, you

may end up with more pieces than you need. And branches cut back for tidiness can make good cuttings. Here are some guidelines about plant contributions.

- \* Plants especially mentioned on the wish list are particularly nice: plumerias, hibiscus, angel trumpets, and roses. These plants have a lot more value if we know what they are, so please label carefully with variety (essential for roses), or at least color (for the others). Also, if you are bringing in plumeria parts, keep them in big chunks and label which way is up. Without leaves, it's hard to tell, and we don't want to be trying to root the wrong end. Cindy also has requested seedling Vitex - check around your plants for volunteers.
- \* If you have other useful or interesting plants to offer, check with Cindy at [cj\\_goodrum@yahoo.com](mailto:cj_goodrum@yahoo.com) to see if they will work for our sale. Cindy prefers not to have lots of odds and ends, because it complicates our information booklet. The general rule of thumb at the sale is to stock six or more of each kind of plant. But there are always exceptions, and if especially good plants come in from various sources, they can add up to six quite quickly. So ask Cindy before you decide to bring or not bring.
- \* When you bring in divisions or cuttings or volunteers, keep them in good condition. Try to collect material right before a work day. Keep potential cuttings in water, or at least wrapped in wet newspaper or paper towel to keep them moist. Plastic grocery bags work well to contain newly dug things. Give them a little water, too, to minimize shock.
- \* Bring your contributions to the potting shed and give them to someone on the propagating

team. The propagators will do the potting and rooting, but if you can stay to help, that's a plus. When they're busy, more hands are always helpful, and they can be sure to get a proper identification for the labels if you're right there. (And remember, that potting shed is where interesting plants are sometimes available to workers!)

Our shade house is filling up fast with plants, but we have a second shade house under construction. Once the irrigation is plumbed in and the shade cloth is installed, we'll have a big new space to put plants for our sale. Do you have plants that you wouldn't want your garden to be without? Let's get them propagated, so we can share them with our customers.



Cindy Goodrum, Plant Sale Coordinator and Greenhouse Manager, potting up one of the Spring Plant Sale offerings.



Divided Salvias (above) and Dianella (below) waiting for pots



## PLANTS OF THE MONTH

### FERN: *Woodwardia orientalis* (Oriental Chain Fern, Mother Fern)

**Size:** 4" H x 4' W  
(fronds up to 6' long)  
**Shape:** Arching layered  
**Light:** Filtered sun to shade  
**Water:** Consistently moist; won't tolerate dry  
**Flowers:** None  
**Fertilize:** Maintain high humus, fertility for best growth  
**Propagation:** Plantlets formed on fronds; spores



Photo courtesy of Yucca-Do

**ANOTHER MOTHER FERN**  
Mercer Arboretum has mature specimens of this fern — it's definitely an 'ooh-aah' knockout — especially in the Prehistoric Garden.

This is occasionally listed as "Mother Fern", but some ferns in the *Asplenium* genus also make plantlets on their fronds. They're generally lacier than *Woodwardia*, but are also called "mother fern". Here's a perfect example of how common names cause confusion.

The evergreen leathery fronds

make plantlets when situated properly. The plantlets are easily potted up, but take quite a while to make a mature plant.

The layered arching fronds droop at the ends giving a look of a tree fern without a trunk.

This is a fern that can be the centerpiece of a shade garden.

Not commonly available; but specialty nurseries, like Caldwell's (who sells it as Mother Fern), carry it.

### NATIVE SHRUB: *Callicarpa americana* (American Beautyberry)

**Size:** 8' x 8' unpruned  
**Shape:** Loose rounded  
**Light:** Dappled to full sun (Leaves yellow-green in full sun)  
**Soil:** Average  
**Water:** Dryish to semi-moist  
**Flowers:** Tiny pale lilac-pink cymes  
**Berries:** Metallic purple  
**Fertilize:** Average-low  
**Propagation:** Seeds, stem cuttings

#### METALLIC WOW!

Another native whose Japanese counterpart is more commercially available, but a must for habitat gardens and its stunning berries.

The native range from the mid-Atlantic states southwest to Texas, including Brazoria county, also extends into Mexico and the Caribbean. The pest-free deciduous American Beautyberry is typically found in rather open, rich woodlands as an understory shrub.

The flowers are prolific but too small to be significant. It's the ensuing metallic purple  $\frac{1}{4}$ " berries that completely circle the stem in late summer-early autumn that provides the wow. Birds relish the berries, usually stripping them within a month of ripening.

To limit the size, it can be whacked back to about 1' in winter without affecting next season's flowers and fruits.

Available: local plant sales or passalong.



### PERENNIAL: *Dianella tasmanica variegata* (Variegated Blue Flax)



**Size:** 3' H x 4+ W  
**Shape:** Upright, clumping  
**Light:** Full sun to part sun  
**Soil/Water:** Well-drained/average  
**Foliage:** Evergreen strap, green & white variegated  
**Flowers:** Tiny pale blue, allegedly followed by brilliant blue berries  
**Fertilize:** Average  
**Propagation:** Clump division

#### BOLD FOLIAGE

When a variegated liriopoe doesn't give enough POW in the garden, try this member of the Phormium family. We really wouldn't expect this Tasmanian native, in a climate akin to San Francisco, to prosper here, but grow it does with a vengeance.

In fact it's even being used in concrete planters in front of the Lake Jackson Target store. And Australian nurseries report that it will take periods of waterlogging, so grow it anywhere that isn't permanently wet.

A good grower, it makes a healthy clump within 2 years, remaining evergreen to at least 25°. The only reported drawback is that plants grown in more shade in this area may get scale, so give it a fair amount of sun.

The all-green Blue Flax appears to set heavy crops of electric blue berries, but there's no report or picture of berries on the variegated version. Just cut off the unattractive flower stalks if it doesn't set berries.

Available: plant sales, passalong, some nurseries.

# BCMGA

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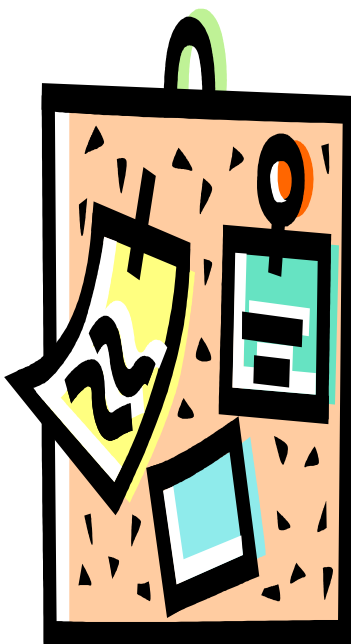
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## ED BARRIOS, THE PREZ, SEZ...

Well, finally a bit of rain and, oh, what a difference it made to the tropical garden. Last time I checked we had about 1.8 inches of rain at BEES in the last 2 weeks, but only 1 inch at my house in Lake Jackson. It was very spotty so I know folks who received much more and some who received much less rain. Plants in the tropical garden are just putting on a show with increased growth and more blooms; especially our Brugmansias which have looked stressed and have not bloomed all year. The El Niño occurrence normally reduces hurricanes, which it has so far, but also normally gives us much more rain. Let's keep our fingers crossed for a wet fall.

If you were at the last general meeting, you know that Carole Wenny, Ellen Pedisich and Barbara Bruyere are on the nominating committee for next year's BCMGA board members and committee chairs. Based on early feedback it looks like there will be several openings. Please consider serving on the leadership team and helping us make our association the best run in our State. If you are interested in a leadership role please contact the nomination committee.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



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

**Hands-On Composting:** Brazosport Garden Club, Tuesday, October 6, 7 pm — 9pm  
Master Composter Ellen Pedisich shows how it's done.  
Lake Jackson Public Library, 250 Circle Way, Lake Jackson

**67th Annual Bulb Mart:** Garden Club of Houston, Thursday, October 8—Saturday, October 10  
9:30 am—5:00 pm Thurs & Fri; 9:30 am—2:00 pm Sat  
Westminster United Methodist Church, 5801 San Felipe (at Bering)

500,000 bulbs and lots of woody and herbaceous material as well. This is the big one...go early for best selection. Free lectures at 8:30 am both Friday and Saturday.

Additional information at: <http://www.gchouston.org/Portals/0/MembersDocs/2009%20BPM%20Guide%20Book.pdf>

**Horticulture Guided Tour:** Houston Zoo, Saturday, October 10, 7:30 am—9:30 am, \$30  
Join the Houston Zoo's horticultural director on a tour of the lush and diverse displays of plants at the zoo.  
Additional information at: <http://www.houstonzoo.org/en/cev/415>

**Trees:** Harris County Extension Precinct 2, Tuesday, October 13, 6:30 pm—9:30 pm, FREE  
1000 Basspro Drive (Hwy 288 & Beltway 8), Pearland  
Dr. Carol Brouwer, Harris Horticulture Agent is the speaker at this Green Thumb Lecture Series