

## Brazoria County Master Gardeners

O, wind, if Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? ~Percy Bysshe Shelley .

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Happy New Year! While the snow in the photo isn't any thing like what has gone on this winter *so far*, this was part of my garden a couple of years ago in Shreveport, LA. That round item in the center is a sago palm which amazingly made it through. 2011 was my first year in the Master Gardener program. I can tell you that it was something I've always wanted

to do. So far, I have learned an amazing amount of information from the program, the staff, the participants and volunteers. There have been seminars to attend, sales to volunteer at, people to meet, expertise to share and good times at BEES.

A new class is beginning with the New Year, with high hopes and new goals. We all wish them the best!

*Remembering the past year with fondness and moving forward to the new year!*



***"There are two seasonal diversions that can ease the bite of any winter. One is the January thaw. The other is the seed catalogues."***

## Calendar of Events

### *Upcoming...*

**Saturday, Feb. 4, 2012** -- Tom LeRoy and Bill Adams, authors of *The Southern Kitchen Garden*, will present an informative presentation on spring vegetable gardening and hold a book signing from 10 a.m. until noon at Kingwood Garden Center, 1216 Stonehollow Dr., Kingwood, 77339.

**Saturday, Feb. 18, 2012** – Brazoria County Master Gardeners Fruit & Citrus Tree Sale, 8 a.m. – noon, Texas AgriLife Extension Office, 21017 County Road 171, Angleton, Texas, 77515.

**Saturday, March 10, 2012**—Brazoria County Water Conservation Conference will be held at Pearland Community Center 9 am to 1:30 pm. Speakers on Climate, Xeriscaping, water well testing and rain water harvesting. Call Brazoria County AgriLife Extension Office 979-864-1558 x 112.



Registration is open for the State 2012 TMGA Conference this year in San Antonio. An outstanding group of speakers, hands on sessions and tours are lined up. The conference will be held at the Norris Conference Center which is conveniently located at Wonderland of the Americas Mall, Interstate 10 and Loop 410. There are many hotels and motels within a 5 mile radius. You can get more information and register at: [www.2012TMGAconference.org](http://www.2012TMGAconference.org) or [www.bexarcounnymastergardeners.org](http://www.bexarcounnymastergardeners.org).



*Fall Bounty*

The last frost took out the last of the Sun Gold cherry tomatoes, but not before I picked several dozen to use in a salad made entirely from what was growing in the garden: Roquette Argula, Southern Giant Curled India mustard greens, Salad Bowl lettuce and French Breakfast radishes.

Courtesy of Jim Molony



## BC Fruiting Plants Seminar

By Jim Molony



since come back. Many of us weren't so fortunate. I lost a key lime tree that was semi-protected but key limes, among the more sensitive citrus trees, need the protection of a tarp and 250-watt bulb to make it through freezes.

Should you have a tree die back following a freeze, don't be in a hurry to replace it. It may not be dead.

"Wait six to eight weeks after the freeze to see if you tree sprouts new growth before you dig it up or cut it down," Livanec said.

Livanec pointed out that the earth radiates heat and that heat can be trapped beneath a tarp set up over the trees. A bulb, if you can string one beneath the tent set-up, is even better. The tree doesn't have to be completely wrapped, just covered over the top, much like a four-post tent you see at picnics and farmer's markets. The fiber/plastic tent material helps contain the heat from the soil which helps protect the tree from freezing temperatures and keeps ice off the leaves.

Master Gardener Gil Livanec of Manvel, paraphrasing Yogi Berra, says "It's not dead until it's dead!"

Livanec was referring to fruit and citrus trees when he made that statement to approximately three dozen gardeners at the Brazoria County Friendly and Tasty Fruiting Plants seminar Saturday morning at the Texas AgriLife Extension Office in Angleton.

"We had a freeze in 2009, an extreme freeze in 2010 followed by a drought this year," Livanec said. "A Texas triple threat."

Even with last year's early January freeze where the temperature stayed below freezing for 42 consecutive hours, Livanec did not lose any trees. His trees did sustain dieback damage, but have

"Nature has undoubtedly mastered the art of winter gardening and even the most experienced gardener can learn from the unrestrained beauty around them."

- Vincent A. Simeone

## Rose Torture:

Severe heat in Texas yields better varieties for research

By Kathleen Phillips

COLLEGE STATION — At least one person admits that the extreme heat in Texas this year was beneficial.

But all the same, he'd opt next time for a handmade torture chamber.

"Some people will complain about the heat, but from my viewpoint as a breeder, I love stress," said Dr. David Byrne, Texas AgriLife Research rose breeder. With maximum mean highs of 107 degrees for weeks near Mansfield and 104 at College Station, where Byrne has research plots, numerous rose varieties were put to one of Mother Nature's extreme tests. "Mother Nature is wonderful but not always steady. Right now we're conjuring up plans to make a 'torture test' for roses where we put them in a box with a certain temperature, leave them there 2-3 weeks, then bring them out and see what their response is," Byrne said.

For now, however, the wacky weather has benefited his research.

"This disastrous summer for most was really a god-send to me because, with the temperatures we had, I could distinguish between roses that could grow and flower well in the heat and those that didn't," he said. "There are some that I thought were very good last year that looked horrible this year.

"I looked at the roses in August during the weeks of extreme heat, and there were a lot of plants that looked like they were about to die they were in such stress," he noted. "They



looked like very crummy plants."

He said the plants were watered regularly and received proper nutrition. But with the extreme heat, the plants did not grow and thus there were no flowers.

"Whereas others in the same plots, you wouldn't know they were in the heat. They had lots of flowers and lots of good growth. There was really a big difference between these two extremes which was just wonderful for us," Byrne said.

Many of the plants that handled the heat well were from lines Byrne has been breeding for four rose generations, or about 10 years.

"We know they are black spot tolerant, and were hoping they were heat tolerant," he said. "So now we have some lines that have both traits at high levels which is good."

But even though this summer helped the researcher make better plant selections, extreme heat is not on anyone's annual wish list, he said. Yet, research requires consistent, repeated evaluations — being able to put consistent conditions on the plants, in this case, year after year. That's where the handmade heat chamber will be useful.

"That will put them through a stress test and help us be able to select the better ones to confirm in field tests. We hope this helps us go through them earlier so we have a better sense of which ones will do well and which ones won't," he said.

Byrne said research now can focus on achieving a range of colors with heat- and black spot-tolerance, because the successful plants noted in this year's trials basically produce an abundance of white, single flowers.

"We're using these heat tolerant plants in our crossing program to get black spot resistance, wonderful flower color and great flower intensity with respect to the number of flowers per bush," Byrne said. "They'll basically be carefree roses in a range of sizes."

Byrne will continue to evaluate plants that survived the Texas 2011 summer and select some of them for further testing with commercial partners. In his research, about 20,000 seed a year is produced, planted and evaluated every year.

## Winter Comfort Food

### *Semi-Homemade Pheasant Pot Pie...*

Pre-heat oven to 350°

**Ingredients:**

Two cups of leftover cubed pheasant meat  
1/2 onion, diced  
1/2 cup potatoes, diced  
1/4 cup celery, diced  
1/4 cup carrots, diced  
8 oz. of sliced mushrooms  
1 tsp. finely diced garlic  
1 tblsp. butter  
1 tbs. bacon drippings  
2 tbs. flour  
1/2 cup white wine, such as Chardonnay  
3/4 cup chicken stock  
1/2 tsp each: fresh thyme, rosemary, parsley  
Salt & pepper to taste  
Pie crust of your choosing (the semi-homemade part)  
Egg wash (egg with 1 tblsp water)

Blanch the potatoes, celery and carrots. Do not cook all the way through. Drain and hold. Saute the onions and garlic in butter bacon drippings. Add the mushrooms and cook for 5 more minutes. Add the flour and cook until flour has thickened the sauce tightly. Add the wine and chicken stock.

Cook until the sauce has thickened. Add the thyme, rosemary, and parsley. Now add the vegetables and meat. Add salt & pepper to taste, adjusting the seasonings to your taste.

Turn out into a deep dish pie pan. Cover with pie crust and decorate if you want. Glaze with egg wash. Cook for 30-40 minutes or until crust is golden.

Enjoy!



*Homemade Pheasant Pot Pie*

I can't take credit for this picture. My daughter made her first homemade pot pie using leftovers from pheasants her husband brought home from one of his hunts. She & I have always enjoyed cooking together and sharing recipes—and decorating our creations!

Courtesy of Shawn Helm

Winter 2012

## Attention Master Gardeners!

Brazoria County Master Gardeners Association interns Shawn Helm and Jim Molony have taken over the responsibility of producing the quarterly newsletter for the volunteer organization, effective with this issue, the Winter 2012 edition. This is your newsletter and we want to continue to make it a useful resource for Brazoria County gardeners. We try to publish the newsletter in April, July, October and January. Shawn and Jim welcome any submitted items, whether listings for the calendar or tips on a specific plant. They can be reached via email at [shawn.helm@yahoo.com](mailto:shawn.helm@yahoo.com) or [jmolonyjr@gmail.com](mailto:jmolonyjr@gmail.com)

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