

Brazoria County Master Gardeners

Newsletter

August 2012

VOL. 2 ISSUE # 3



Red burgundy onions (Photo

Hello Master Gardeners,

Our Spring rains continued until early July and now we've had about 4 weeks of no rain, but wow what a good run we've had. Many of the plants at the gardens are huge – of course so are the weeds. The Tropical Garden looked so bleak this Winter after last year's drought and now it looks overgrown. Our Spring sale was successful, but slightly less profitable than last year. Thanks to Donie Stowers and Bebe Brown and all the assistants and volunteers for making the sale possible. Already Gil Livanec - Fruit Plant Sale Leader, and Debbie Pike - Spring Sale Leader, have put together teams to plan next year's

events. Both teams have already started meeting and coming up with some good ideas to spark sales. Project wise the entrance pergola for the Enabling Gardens is completed and looks so good, professional even. Thanks to Billy Heck for his leadership and all those that have worked tirelessly on this. Next step is installing the pavers. Also Debbie & Larry Pike have designed and donated the materials for 4 large picnic tables to be located between the old office building and the barn. Billy Heck's brother is cutting all the lumber according to the design and we assemble and paint all the pieces in the barn. Calista Stewart is working on reclaiming an abandoned garden on the west side of the old office building. She has completed the design and all the plants will be from the Texas Superstar® collection. Finally progress continues to be made on the Rose Garden, the brickwork is almost finished. It's going to be a gem when it is completed later this year. So I'll close by thanking the many, many folks that regularly come out, especially now during the heat, to continue to make BEES be a show place we can all be proud of.

Ed

Plant Sale team needs your help

The 2013 Brazoria County Master Gardener Plant Sale Leadership Team met recently. The team is constantly looking for ways to save time, money and effort associated with the Plant Sale.

We would like to hear your ideas for cutting Plant Sale costs.

If you have had any ideas in the past that you thought would cut costs, please submit them. While, there is no guarantee that all ideas will be implemented, all ideas will certainly be *considered*.

Any ideas/suggestions should be submitted to Donie Stowers and/or Debbie Pike.

*"Dirty hands, iced tea, garden fragrances thick in the air and a blanket of color before me,
who could ask for more?"*

- Bev Adams, Mountain Gardening

Calendar of Events

What's Ahead

August

10 – Brazoria County Master Gardeners Association board meeting, 10 a.m. Brazoria County Master Gardeners Association regular meeting, 11 a.m.

14 -- Green Thumb Lecture Series. Skip Richter will provide a "hands-on" workshop on "Vegetable Gardening and Healthy Eating." Open to the public. \$25 fee,. 6 p.m., The Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park (on the lakeside), 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, 77586.

15 -- Master Gardener Lecture Series. Eulas Stafford, of the Plumeria Society will provide a lecture on "Plumerias." This lecture is free and open to the public. 10 a.m., The Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park (on the lakeside), 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, 77586.

September

14 – Brazoria County Master Gardeners Association board meeting, 10 a.m. BC Master Gardeners Association regular meeting, 11 a.m.

22 -- The League City Garden Club Garden Walk on Saturday, Sept. 22, 2012, 10 to 4. Six private and original gardens throughout League City will open for the club's second annual tour. Each has been chosen for its beauty and distinction, all quite unique, reflecting the personality of its owner. This year's theme is "Wild and Natural," celebrating the beautiful ways native plants are used in private garden landscapes. For ticket information, contact Sis Norman, 281-332-2605, or Shelia Thorne, 281-334-7529, gardenplayspace@yahoo.com. For those outside League City, mail order is available.



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regarding the value potential of your trees and work with you to determine the best trees and shrubs to plant for your existing landscape. Contact the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), a public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture since 1938. It has more than 2,000 member companies who recognize stringent safety and performance standards and who are required to carry liability insurance. TCIA has the nation's only Accreditation program that helps consumers find tree care companies that have been inspected and accredited based on: adherence to industry standards for quality and safety; maintenance of trained, professional staff; and dedication to ethics and quality in business practices. An easy way to find a tree care service provider in your area is to use the "Find Qualified Tree Care" program. You can use this service by calling 1-800-733-2622 or by doing a ZIP code search on www.tcia.org

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

- Genesis 8: 22



Kate helps her Dad with the planting.

I have been asked what the 1015 refers to on the 1015 yellow onions sets you see in area feed stores and nursery centers in late summer/early fall. The 1015 refers to Oct. 15, which is the accepted best time to plant these varieties of onions in south Texas.

There are numerous choices for onion lovers in our area, and the 1015Y remains one of the more popular yellow onion options of the short day (11-12 hour day lengths) crowd, along with Chula Vista, Jaguar, Mercedes, Sweet Sunrise, Early Grano 502 and Granex, with the latter two ranking as arguably the favorite varieties of the many of the area growers I've spoken with over the years.

White onion varieties like Texas Early White, Crystal Wax, Cirrus, Mid Star, Spano and Spanish Sweet have their followers in Texas and all are good choices for the area.

Red Burgundy wins

When mid-October rolls around, however, I don't bother with the yellows or the whites, but plant (with the exception of a pair of small patches of white bunching onions and Egyptian Walking Onions) nothing but short day red varieties grown from sets. Red Bone, Fuego and Rio Santiago are all good, but I prefer Red Burgundy for ease in growing and exceptional taste.

I've tried seeds and transplants and have some success with both, but the years have shown, at

Yellow/white are all right, but make my onions red, thank you

By JIM MOLONY



least to me, that planting sets in mid-October is the way to go in our area. Around here we have clay "gumbo" soil, which can turn brick-like in drought (like now) or thick mud when saturated. Growing onions in this kind of soil requires some work, but if you have the soil prepped properly onions can be a low maintenance, low pest crop that will provide ample enjoyment come April and May when the bulbs are ready.

First, you'll need a full sun area with good drainage. I like to work in organic matter like compost and till the section to be planted thoroughly prior to setting out sets, which are small, marble sized onion starts.

Onions are a cool season crop and can stand temperatures well below freezing, but you want to be sure not to plant the sets too deep. About three-quarters of an inch is ideal, but better to err on too shallow rather than too deep. Make sure the root side is down and plant each set 3-4 inches apart. I like to put mulch around the onions after they've grown 3-4 inches tall. This helps keep the weeds down and retain moisture.

Onions can be harvested at any time, but if you leave them in the ground until the tops fall over you'll get bigger bulbs which will last longer than those harvested when small as green onions.

Onions are very shallow rooted, so be careful working around them and when harvesting them. I usually use a trowel to loosen the dirt around the bulb, then pry them off. The papery outer layer of onion skin peels off easily, leaving you with beautiful and delicious onions like the ones in the picture. Whether eaten raw in salads or cooked, you'd be hard pressed to come up with a better-tasting locally grown onion than Red Burgundy.

**"Summertime, and the living is easy. Fish are jumpin', and the cotton is high.
Oh, your daddy's rich, and your mama's good lookin'.
So hush little baby now, don't you cry."**

George Gershwin and Dubose Heyward, Porgy and Bess

August 2012

Attention Master Gardeners!

Brazoria County Master Gardeners Association members Shawn Helm and Jim Molony have taken over the responsibility of producing the quarterly newsletter for the volunteer organization. This is your newsletter and we want to continue to make it a useful resource for Brazoria County gardeners. Shawn and Jim welcome any submitted items, whether listings for the calendar or tips on a specific plant, subject, topic or tip. They can be reached via email at shawn.helm@yahoo.com or jmolonyjr@gmail.com

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Citrus 'anting' grackles common this time of year

Ever notice some scarring on the rinds of your citrus fruit? Black dimples, rough spots, brown

pecks on the rinds? They may not be bugs but birds causing the problem.

I've many times seen grackles pecking at the unripe lemons on my Meyer lemon trees, and while they don't harm the fruit they do scar the peels as they peck at the fruit.

This is a result of anting, where a bird uses the chemicals in the green fruit as a defense against parasites.

Auk, an ornithological journal, published an article on the subject titled Common Grackle anting with lime fruit and its effect on ectoparasites. Here's a link for more reading on the subject:

<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Auk/v110n04/p0951-p0952.pdf>

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