



June

Jorja Merrick
6/6

Jennifer Lay
6/7

Paula Marshall
6/29

July

Pat Brand
7/2

Jim Lathem
7/10

John Womack
7/12

Heidi Rose Stone
7/24

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We welcome all of our Master Gardeners to forward articles or information for our newsletter to our Editor: sandrarosen42@yahoo.com
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 Sandra Rosen Joan Driver
 Paula Marshall Anna Baker

Intern Dinner 2016

By Paula Marshall



Class of 2016 Interns (L to R) Jennifer Lay, John Clark, Karen Gonzalez, Heidi Rose Stone, Kathy Massey, Susan Dahlman, Connie Ann Tramel and Jimmie Pierce

Eight new interns, their spouses, 17 FSMG members, Tommy, Melisa and a very special guest celebrated the completion of the 2016 Master Gardener Training Classes at Van Zandt Country Club on the evening of May 12th. After participants voted for their two favorite salsas and enjoyed a delicious meal of fajitas and all the trimmings, Tommy Phillips presented the interns with certificates of completion and MG aprons. The interns have one year to fulfill the 50 hours of volunteer time requirement and then will officially become Master Gardeners in Van

Zandt County.

It was a special evening attended by special people, including surprise guest, Peggy Rogers. Peggy told the group about approaching County Extension Agents during her many moves throughout Texas, stressing to them the importance of a Master Gardener Program and requesting that they help her start one. The agents would consistently refuse, many times saying, "Not in MY lifetime!"

When Peggy and her husband moved to Wills Point, she joined the Wood County Master Gardener Chapter which had already been established. Knowing the value that Master Gardeners bring to their communities, Peggy approached the VZ County Extension Agent, and was again told

no. THEN, a new County Extension Agent came to town! Not one to be discouraged, Peggy met with the new guy, Tommy Phillips, and he (after only a little reluctance) agreed to her request. He and Peggy came up with a plan and a program that met A&M's Master Gardener criteria and, in 2013, the first class of four "wannabe" MG's signed up for the 3-month course.

Peggy is now First Vice President of the State Master Gardener Association and will become its President in 2017. Many of us were fortunate to get to know her and experience her enthusiasm for gardening when she oversaw classes here for two consecutive years.

A big Thank YOU goes out to Sally Mitchell for the many hours of planning this celebration which turned out to be a wonderful evening of fellowship, good food and fun. Congratulations again, to all of our new soon-to-be members, and if you need to get your 50 hours of volunteer time in, we have lots of events and activities planned, along with plenty of gardens to weed to help you get there!



Peggy Rogers



Time to Trade Shovels June & July



Gardening Chores

Tommy Phillips
County Extension Agent, Ag/NR

School's out, it's getting hotter and summer time activities are getting into full swing. June brings both the opportunity to plant summer color, and the routine garden maintenance of mowing and weeding. This spring's plentiful rainfall has hopefully helped our lawns, trees and gardens to begin to recover from last year's extreme stress. Take advantage of the longer days by doing gardening tasks in the morning or evening when it is more pleasant to be outside. To keep the lawn and garden looking great, here are a few tips for this June.

LAWNS

Hotter weather means grass will be growing faster. Keep up with the mowing so you don't have to bag the clippings. That may mean mowing every 5 or 6 days instead of every 7 to 10 days. Letting the clippings fall back into the lawn recycles nutrients but does not promote thatch. Keep the mower blade sharpened. Mowing frequently at the correct height will promote a healthy, thick turf that is resistant to weeds.

For St. Augustine or Bermuda lawns making poor growth thus far this year, make a second application of fertilizer. For best results, use a fertilizer with a high percentage of slow-release nitrogen so the grass won't grow quite so rapidly. Be careful to not apply too much fertilizer. Warning! A wet, rainy June and lushly growing grass from high rates of nitrogen can lead to gray leaf spot, a fungal disease of St. Augustine grass. Symptoms include gray lesions outlined in black on the leaf blades. Severe infestations result in a "melting away" appearance, with the leaves collapsing, quickly decaying, exposing the soil underneath. Areas staying wet, in the shade, in low spots, frequently watered, infrequently mowed and recently fertilized are the most prone to gray leaf spot.

Centipede lawns fertilized earlier this year do not need to be fertilized at this time. Wait until fall for the next application. As spring rains slack off and give way to drier days, apply supplemental water as needed. The rule of thumb is to water enough to wet the soil 5 to 6 inches deep. Do not water too frequently. Shallow, frequent watering promotes a shallow root system that is more susceptible to the stress of summer heat and winter cold.

LANDSCAPE PLANTS

The best way to conserve moisture in the landscape is by mulching. Pine bark, pine needles, cypress bark, composted grass clippings and shredded leaves are among the materials suitable for a mulch. A three to four inch layer over the root zone retains moisture, keeps the soil cooler and helps prevent weed seeds from germinating under your shrubs, trees and flowers. As you check your shrubs, ground covers and flower beds, watch for seedling trees, such as oak, hickory and pecan. They are more easily pulled when young, and an old pair of pliers will help you get the grip needed close to the ground to pull up root and all. They are also more easily extracted when the soil is moist.

SUMMER COLOR

June is a great month for setting out colorful summer annuals. For large areas, try directly seeding zinnias, cosmos, gomphrena or portulaca. There are several others you can set out now as transplants including marigold, salvia, gaillardia, petunias, purslane, verbena, dusty miller, lantana, ageratum, amaranthus, gomphrena (globe amaranth or batchlor's buttons), celosia, Texas bluebells (or lisianthus), cockscomb, and firebush. Plant copper plants now in a sunny spot for a beautiful display this fall. Color for shady areas include caladiums, coleus, impatiens and bedding begonias. Try nicotiana and coleus in partial shade, or for full sun the two Texas SuperStars (TM) SunColeus varieties 'Burgundy Sun' and 'Plum Parfait'. Many nurseries now have a great supply of perennials to brighten the summer garden. Look for perennial hibiscus, canna, daylilies (select soon for the color you want), yarrow, summer phlox, salvia, perennial lantana, montbretia, Rudbeckia 'Goldstrum' and purple coneflower. Plant mums now for fall bloom. Pinch back established mums, along with other fall bloomers like Mexican mint marigold, Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) and autumn asters to encourage compactness and more flowers. Water transplants before you plant and then again afterwards. The soil should be well-prepared with additions of organic matter, and well-drained. Apply a diluted solution of water-soluble fertilizer at planting and then regularly once plants begin to put on new growth. Remove faded blooms to encourage new growth and repeat bloom. A layer of mulch will conserve water and prevent weeds. Summer tropical plants, though they are not freeze hardy, are perfectly at home in our East Texas heat and humidity. Plant them in the ground for quick growth or plant in pots or tubs so you can overwinter them indoors. Some of the best include tropical hibiscus, penta, oleander (semi-hardy), bougainvillea, mandevilla vine (spectacular!), agapanthus, trailing lantanas, allamanda vine and plumbago. These sun and heat lovers will quickly brighten up your yard and give a great display all summer and fall.

ROSES

Be sure to mulch your roses to conserve moisture and keep down summer weeds. Continue a routine spray program to control blackspot, and watch for insects and mites. Remove flowers as they fade and feed regularly to encourage new blooms.

AZALEAS

Apply a four to six inch layer of pine needles or other mulch to conserve water around these shallow-rooted shrubs. Feed them very lightly with a complete fertilizer to encourage production of new growth. Watch out for spider mites and lace bugs which feed on the underside of leaves. Their piercing and sucking causes the leaves to look stippled and bleached or bronzed.

PESTS AND PROBLEMS

One of the most common tomato disorders is blossom end rot. This is not a disease but a physiological problem caused by a lack of calcium and fluctuating soil moisture. Keep the soil evenly moist, mulch to conserve moisture and lime the soil before planting the next crop to provide calcium. Blossom end rot usually only affects the first tomatoes to ripen.

Spider mites can occur on tomatoes, roses, junipers, marigolds and other ornamentals now that the weather is hot and dry. Look for stippled leaves, and under severe infestations, fine webbing. Spider mites can be detected by taking suspicious leaves and rapping them over a white sheet of paper. Any dots which move are probably mites. Light infestations can be reduced by frequently spraying leaves with a sharp stream of water or using insecticidal soap. For more severe problems, use an approved miticide.

Gardening Events – June/July 2016

By Marsha Sasser

June at the Dallas Arboretum: Quite a few Lunch and Learn programs. Most cost around \$25.

11:30 – 1 p.m. (Go to their web site, click on “Adult Programs”, then “Gardening and Design”.)

Thursday, June 16: Henderson County MG-ers Summer Series #1. “Beautiful, Low-Maintenance Roses for Your Landscape,” with Mark Chamblee. 6-7:30 p.m. First Methodist Church, 507 N. Broad Street, Chandler.

Saturday, June 18: Free State Jubilee in The Arbors at First Monday Trade Days. 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Thursday,

Thursday, June 23: Horticulture Field Day in Overton. Starts at 8:30 a.m. Free, including BBQ Lunch.

(Go to flowers.tamu.edu/horticulture-field-day/ or call 903-834-6191.)

Saturday, June 25: Texas Discovery Garden in Dallas, “Water-Wise Organic Gardening”. 10 am – noon.

Dr. Peter Schaar. (Must RSVP to Fran at FThompson@TexasDiscoveryGardens.org.)

Thursday, July 21: Henderson County MG Summer Series #2. “Texas Shade Gardens”, with Steven Chamblee, 5:30-8:00 p.m., Senior Citizens Center, 3344 Hwy. 31E, Athens

Gardeners on the Move

By Paul Marshall

It was a cloudy, humid morning but the rain held off for the 2016 Annual Garden Tour presented by the Smith County Master Gardeners, Saturday, May 28th.

Five gardens, all within 20 minutes of each other, were represented and ranged from completely and partly-shaded gardens to those that were in full and part sun. It was nice to see contrasts in the plants that thrived in the different landscapes, ranging from those that looked as though they were professionally maintained to those that were tended by the homeowners themselves.

A booklet was provided to each guest that included a map and description of each garden along with a little bit of its history. It included many of the plants the homeowner chose for their landscape. The booklet was extremely informative and I enjoyed reading it once I got home, as I tried to remember which garden belonged to which house.

This was the first time I had attended a tour of people's private gardens and was happy that I had done so. Arboretums and public gardens are lovely, but in my opinion, many are not “real world”. This tour gave me insight into how I could actually, realistically, improve my gardens and was well worth the four hours and \$12. Smith County MGs did a terrific job and I will go again next year – rain or shine! I also think it would be fun to consider doing a garden tour of our own next spring – just for FSMG members. Any volunteers?



Salsa Contest Results

By Paula Marshall

Five eager contestants waited anxiously to hear if their salsa was chosen by their peers to be the best at the 2016 Intern Graduation Dinner held on Thursday evening, May 12th.

Guests took their time tasting, analyzing and re-tasting the salsas before making their final decision and casting votes for their two favorites. It was a tough decision to make as all of the salsas were delicious, but votes were tallied and the results were announced.

Sally Mitchell won first place with Karen Gonzalez a close second. There was only one contestant who questioned the results, and she, who will remain unnamed, asked why her salsa didn't win! After learning that the winners would stand as announced, this "dissenter" admitted that she had bought the salsa she entered at a nearby restaurant, claiming that she had "missed the memo" saying it had to be homemade! (Editor's note: Yeah – right!)

It was a fun activity and thanks to those who brought their wonderful salsas for all of us to try - even you, Ms. Dissenter. By the way, where did you buy the salsa you entered because it WAS really good??

Contestants were Sally, Karen, Michael, Nancy and Martha. Thanks to everyone for participating. Sally's winning recipe follows:

- 8 cups of tomatoes (peelings removed)
- 1 1/2 cups green peppers (chopped)
- (I use bell pepper or similar peppers from my garden)
- 2 1/2 cups onions (chopped)
- 1 cup jalapeño peppers (chopped)
- 6 cloves of garlic (minced)
- 2 tsp cumin
- 2 tsp ground black pepper
- 2 Tablespoons canning salt
- 1 Tablespoon sugar
- 1/3 cup white vinegar
- 1-15 oz. can of tomato sauce
- 1-12 oz. can of tomato paste

Mix all ingredients together and bring to a slow boil. Boil for 10 minutes. Place in jars and seal the lids. Cook in hot water bath for 10 minutes.

Note: To easily remove the tomato skin, drop tomatoes in boiling water until the skin begins to crack open. Place in cold water bath. The skin comes off easily!



Nancy Szabo organizes the Salsa Contest



Karen Gonzalez (2nd Place) and the Winner, Sally Mitchell. Now what did I do with that photo of Martha Mitchell?



Your gonna' vote for which one? Some of the judges!

The next newsletter will be printed in August, the staff is taking a vacation.

Best Gardening Experience

By Joan Driver

"Mom, you need to come see the property we're looking at. There's daylilies!," exclaimed our daughter-in-law, Mandy. And I thought. . . OK, a couple of landscaped beds, I guess. Little did I know what an amazing experience I would become involved in.

When I joined them to inspect the house and acreage they would soon purchase near Winnsboro, Mandy led me to the farthest corner of the 104 acres and stopped before a tangled mass of weeds, including berry vines and head-high goat weed, and announced, "There's daylilies here." And I thought. . . Really. But when I poked around the edge for a moment I spied a few tapering dead leaves. Digging beneath them I found green shoots below the surface. We were in the middle of a severe dry spell in summer, 2006, but I knew from experience that daylilies are pretty resilient. "Mandy, if you'll clear this mess and get these things some water, I think they'll be fine," I told her.

The next surprise was learning that these struggling plants were just the edge of a little nursery containing more than 600 daylily cultivars. At that point, however, the flowers were only a curiosity and a sidebar for Dan and Mandy, whose commercial interests were confined to poultry and cattle.

Dan agreed to let me investigate the financial aspects of the daylilies. My first contact was a Smith County master gardener who suggested that I call Jack Carpenter, a professional grower at Center, Texas. When I Googled Jack's name I got hits as far away as Australia from nurserymen advertising his creations for sale. To my everlasting gratitude that kind man returned my phone call and spent nearly an hour assuring me that there was indeed a living to be made in daylilies and telling me how it worked. When I had relayed the story to our Winnsboro kids, even Mandy's dad – who had originally declared he didn't even know what a daylily looked like – showed up in a couple of days to join us in laboriously digging the thick overgrowth away from the clumps of plants.

Dan and Mandy learned that the previous owner, who had recently died after an extended illness, had been collecting daylilies in hopes of cloning them in masses for sale. They found lists and finally a map of his beds. Upon careful examination Mandy began to locate cultivar names written in permanent marker on the wooden borders dividing beds and was able to use them to orient herself to the diagrams the developer had made for himself. They had flowers, and they had names. They felt as if they had possibly struck gold!

The next months involved a lot of hard work as I helped Mandy locate and weed clumps of daylilies. Most, but not all, we found names for. The following spring Dan broke ground in front of their new home to create beds in long rows where we transplanted the divided clumps of daylilies. We dug the clumps, some of them containing more than 100 fans, and placed them in individual tubs with their labels to be hauled to the new rows and separated and planted by hand.

The next year they were a glory to behold as they bloomed for weeks in a multitude of shades and wild combinations of pink, red, yellow, orange, and purple. We spent hours studying the daylily reference books that were part of the gardening library the heirs had left to go with the property and the house. I enjoyed going up to help just for the joy of walking the rows, and sometimes with the added bonus of bringing home the odds and ends of plants that we called "orphans."

Mandy for a time envisioned a lasting income from the daylilies, but eventually she had to give up the idea. Relocating the nursery was an exhausting task, and before it was completed Mandy had committed to full-time employment as an elementary teacher. Grass and weeds were troublesome in the newly created beds, and hiring help to clean them became an expense that frugal Dan was unwilling to bear for a project that was not paying its own way. When a difficult pregnancy ended Mandy's ability to work the daylilies at all that year, she knew it was time to let them go.

It was not a total loss, and the beautiful flowers did not go to waste as I feared for a short time. Mandy found a buyer who dug and carried away every plant. To my amazement I found that they had found a home closer to me than at Winnsboro. The buyer was Dawnvolyn Callahan, a Henderson County master gardener who operates Big Chicken Daylily Farm at her home between Edom and Chandler. (Unfortunately, the Big Chicken Facebook page indicates that the farm is closed this year due to family illness.) On the several occasions that I have visited the farm surrounding Dawnvolyn's home I have spotted familiar names and faces of beautiful blooms I helped cultivate 60 miles north. It's one of the most satisfying gardening experiences I've ever had.

P.S. My contact with the master gardener in Smith County was my first knowledge of the organization and led to my taking intern classes the next year, 2007. I was impressed by his knowledge and friendliness.

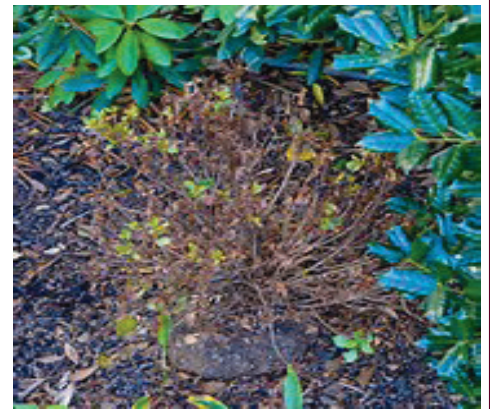


My Worst Gardening Experience

By Sandra Rosen

Well, I was young, anyway that's my excuse. My husband and I had just bought our first house - we paid \$12,000 for it, so that should tell you this happened a long time ago - and I wanted to plant azaleas under the front windows. I went to our local nursery, bought 10 azalea plants, a shovel, and fertilizer. Thinking about how beautiful they would be, I decided that I would be extra smart and put the fertilizer down with the roots so that they would have

"extra power" really quickly. Well, they began to die before my very eyes. I called the nursery and was told that I might try washing the roots off, but probably it wouldn't work. It didn't; they were gone, and I learned another lesson the hard way! Being young and broke, it was quite some time before the azaleas were replanted, but they were and although I don't live there anymore, I occasionally drive by, and they are still beautiful.



Pat's Reminders

By President Pat Briggs

We have several ongoing projects that are certainly worth your time to see:

The Canton Junior High (Buffalo Street) Butterfly Garden.

The Wills Point Train Station just north of Hwy 80.

The Extension Office Garden, which is now being expanded by the 2016 class to include the front of the extension office. It is so pleasing to see these beautiful garden areas, and I find the group effort very rewarding And I am sure many of our group have terrific garden areas that would be a delight to tour.



As we continue this year, remember there are various training opportunities available that I normally forward to you via email. Some of these would give you a specialist designation. If you have any questions about any of these, please don't hesitate to ask.

"The best thing a farmer can put on his crops is his shadow."



Will's Point Depot Garden



Canton Jr. High Butterfly Garden, on Buffalo Street, go by and see it.



Extension Office Garden



Extension Office New Garden, Watch the Class of 2016

Canton Junior High Butterfly Garden Phase II Is Complete!

By Cynthia Holifield

Need something to motivate and encourage you in your gardening efforts? Garden alongside a child; what a boost of enthusiasm they provide!

On May 24th, 7th grade Life Science students at Canton Junior High worked side by side with Free State Master Gardeners to complete the second of three phases of a butterfly garden adjacent to the school entrance.

Denise Stapleton, Junior High Life Science Teacher and her students were on hand throughout the day for weeding (there was even a weed contest for most pulled), using a wheel barrow to unload and spread a yard of prepared gardening soil, planting and watering. It was truly a joy to spend the time providing guidance and encouragement while the students took ownership in creating their garden. Discussions centered on pollinators already buzzing around the new plants, the most efficient way to load and dump a wheelbarrow full of soil, as well as the best way to prepare a plant to be installed in the garden.

A hands-on, experiential garden for her students has been a dream of Mrs. Stapleton for several years. She says she was inspired by the PBS Saturday TV show, "Growing A Greener World" that featured a segment on educating kids to live sustainably.

The garden has been created by literally reclaiming portions of a 40' X 60' area of knee high Asian jasmine ground cover. The first bed was installed in the early summer of 2015. This year the garden area has doubled inside, and includes a wheel chair accessible granite path that can be used by students and the community to experience the garden. In 2017, the final garden bed will be added, as well as a vine covered arbor and bench and a butterfly puddler. Hopefully, web based plant identification signs that will allow students to scan the plant sign with their cell phone to access information about the plants and what type pollinator it supports will be provided.

Stop by and see the garden at 1115 S. Buffalo Street, or better yet, join us for our next workday on Tuesday, June 7th at 10:00 and help spread two yards of pine mulch to get the garden ready for summer.

Out of the mouth of babes:



"Look he's pollinating!"

"This is a LOT more fun than I thought it would be"

"Huh, gardening is kind of relaxing"

