

BIRTHDAYS:

Volume 5, Issue 3March, 2019

March

Gay Mitchell, 3/2
Sandra Rosen, 3/10

April

Susan Dahlman, 4/13
Kathy Massey, 4/6

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Greenhouses	1
President's Message	2
Garden Guru.....	2
Jr. MG Update	2
March Chores	3\5
Garden Events.....	4
Mike Loggins	5
Spring Planting Chart	6

Newsletter Staff Needs Your Help!

If you like to write, or even if you don't, but have good ideas for articles and/or subjects for the newsletter please consider joining the newsletter staff.
Contact Sandra Rosen or Paula Marshall for more information.

We welcome all of our Master Gardeners to forward articles or information for our newsletter to our Editor:
sandrarosen42@yahoo.com
News Committee:
Sandra Rosen Joan Driver
Paula Marshall Anna Baker
Don Taylor Jan Graham
John Womack

FSMG Greenhouses

For the Master Gardener, to have a greenhouse in your own backyard is like having a really, special Christmas present. To have a greenhouse means a longer growing season, more opportunities to experiment, more time to spend in your garden, and more opportunity to enjoy the gardening activities that really make you relax and feel at peace. To watch a seed sprout, to see a flower bloom in winter, to nurse an unhealthy plant back to life, grow a tomato in winter, or to feel the warmth and presence of nature's growth is "candy" for the gardener.

These are a few of the greenhouses that are in the backyards of our own Master Gardeners.



Kathy Brasuell



Nancy Szabo



Sandra Rosen



Sarri Curran

President's Message

March is a busy month for gardeners, and a super busy month for the Free State Master Gardeners. We have our first seminar of the year on Tuesday evening, March 5th featuring Greg Grant, parking cars for Trade Days February 28th and March 1, Pat and Don Taylor giving a program on Hobby Greenhouses at our member meeting the 14th, Dallas Blooms trip on the 19th, the ongoing geranium sale with deliveries on March 27th, and the first Library Series program, "It's Time to Garden", given by Tommy on Thursday, March 21st, 10:00 a.m.

In addition, many of the committees are beginning to plan their activities for the year, and by the way, may I thank all of you who have made commitments to help out this year? We need everybody to participate in order to be successful, and besides that, it's just plain fun to get to know each other and work together on things that we're all interested in. So, again, thanks for stepping up!

Nancy Szabo held two classes on Tuesday, February 12th, teaching approximately 15 members the capabilities of the Power Point software program.

Nancy showed how to put together an attractive presentation using PP's features, as well as tips on how to keep a listeners' attention and keep a presentation running smoothly. There's nothing like a hands-on training session by someone who is well versed in a software program but doesn't get too detailed; Nancy did an excellent job of explaining enough to be helpful, but not so much that left me overwhelmed.

One of our association's goals this year is for FSMG's to speak to other groups to pass along horticultural information and acquaint them with the Master Gardener Program. Presenting a program using a software program like Power Point is much more effective than just a talk. Thank you, Nancy, for taking the time to put this training together, and to the members who attended, don't forget to enter your time spent in the class as CEU's.

I have had fun this month starting tomatoes, peppers and a few other things



Nancy Szabo's Power Point Class

by seed in the house. Putting a tiny seed in soil that looks like stuff from a bird's nest, watering it, covering it with a plastic bag and putting it in a warm place with good light, and seeing a tiny little sprout begin to emerge in a few days is just "freaking amazing", as Mike Loggins, our February speaker put it! If you've never tried it, I hope you will – it's kind of like giving birth, but not nearly as painful and you don't have to get up in the night to feed it. Happy gardening everyone!

Sincerely,
Paula

"Whatever we do, we do well."

Garden Guru



Dear Garden Guru: What is the easiest way to tell if my seeds are still good?

Take 10 seeds from your batch and place them on a dampened paper towel. Fold the paper towel over in half, covering the seeds. Put the towel in a plastic ziplock bag. Set in a warm place (approximately 70-75 degrees F). The seeds should start to sprout within several days of each other. When germination stops and seeds have no longer sprouted for several days, you'll know the general germination rate you can expect from this batch of seeds. For example, seven sprouted seeds would equal a 70% germination rate and worth planting. Two sprouted seeds would equal a 20% rate and probably not worth your bother.

By John Womack, MG



Junior Master Gardener Update

Let us begin by thanking Ms. Elizabeth Lowe, Art teacher at Martins Mill School and a Master Gardener.

She asked our association if she might add JrMG program to the curriculum of her two third grade classes. With the blessing of Principal Stringer and our MG board, and the support of our MG volunteers the program began.

Sadly with growing responsibilities of Ms. Lowe's classes, she was unable to continue the JrMG classes.

The initial introduction of the JrMG program into the school was a success. The students eagerly looked forward to the JrMG class and learned many new things about the horticultural aspects of our lives.

This year our MG's will prepare to introduce the JrMG to another school program in our county. However, instruction for volunteers will better equip us in the future.

If you are interested in receiving instruction along with school administrators and educators, watch for announcement of class and sign on the dotted line!

Thank you. Donna J. Burcham, JrMG, Coordinator volunteer

March Gardening Chores

Tommy Phillips

County Extension Agent, Ag/NR

One of the busiest gardening months of the year is here. March weather can be very fickle - it could still freeze since average last freeze is around March 12, and yet it still could be very balmy and pleasant most of the month. Freezing weather mainly affects the timing of planting cold-sensitive plants, like tomatoes or begonias. If you decide to take chances with tender plants, be prepared to give them a protective covering.

PLANTING

March is a great month to plant almost every kind of landscape plant. The sooner you plant, the quicker the plant will start getting established. This is important if the plants are to do well through the hot, stressful summer. Nurseries are receiving weekly shipments of fresh nursery stock, and this is prime time to buy and plant!

Sometimes, though, eager gardeners jump the gun on some yard and garden chores which might be better delayed to later in spring. For example, many folks will apply fertilizer in early spring to try and force the grass to green up early. However, based on the latest research, turfgrass experts recommend delaying fertilizing warm season lawn grasses (St. Augustine and Bermuda) until April and to wait to fertilize Centipede until May. Spring green-up results from nutrients that were stored by the grass last fall (hence the importance of fall fertilization). Pushing the lawn too hard in the early spring could result in a weaker root system going into the summer. Tall fescue is an exception and should be fertilized now.

Caladium bulbs require warm soil temperatures, and setting them out in early spring can cause them to rot. Go ahead and purchase them as soon as they are available, but wait until the soil temperature reaches 70 degrees F to plant them.

Periwinkles or vinca is a bedding plant which also loves hot weather. When setting out before the days turn truly hot, they often get a fungal disease that can destroy a whole bed of periwinkles. Mild, wet, spring weather provides the perfect environment for this devastating disease which, unfortunately, has discouraged many gardeners from planting them altogether. Periwinkle is still a great bedding plant for summer color - just simply wait until May or early June to plant them.

LAWNS

Control winter weeds by starting your regular mowing regime. Get your mower blade sharpened now before the spring repair rush. If you decide to scalp your lawn, wait until all danger of freezing is over. The average last freeze for our area is mid-March. If you do scalp, turn that huge amount of clippings into a fine soil amendment by composting it rather than filling up the landfill with it.

If you missed applying a pre-emergent weed preventer in February and you had a summer weed problem in your lawn last year (such as grass burs), then go ahead and make an application now. You may have missed a portion of the weeds which germinate in early spring (like crabgrass), but will still control the many other types that can germinate anytime during the warm part of the year.

As mentioned above, wait to fertilize your St. Augustine or Bermuda lawn until April, or after you have mowed actively growing grass (not weeds) twice.

PRUNING

Pruning of evergreen and summer flowering trees and shrubs should be completed this month. But, prune spring flowering shrubs (forsythia, quince, azaleas, spirea, etc) only after they finish blooming if needed. Hydrangeas also bloom on the prior year's growth, so prune after they bloom.

Shear back Asiatic jasmine, if needed, just as new growth starts to encourage new growth from the base.

As the lovely blooms of daffodils and jonquils fade away, it is tempting to remove or hide the leaves. However, let them yellow naturally. Next year's flower buds are being formed at this time, and healthy, green leaves are needed to ensure an even better display next year.

LANDSCAPING

After camellias and azaleas finish blooming, fertilize them with 2 to 3 pounds of azalea-camellia fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed area.

This is a good time to start hanging baskets of petunias, begonias, impatiens, and other annuals. Hanging baskets add another dimension to the landscape, allowing you to bring color and accents to other areas around your house.

Dig and divide summer and fall blooming perennials this month. Fall asters, chrysanthemums, salvia and other summer/fall perennials can be invigorated and increased for expanding your beds or sharing/trading with other gardeners.

The mulch underneath azalea, camellia, and other shrubs may have partially decomposed, adding organic matter to the soil, but leaving areas suitable for weed invasion. Add more where needed, using organic mulches such as pine needles, pine bark or cypress bark.

Begin fertilizing roses every 4 to 6 weeks from now until September. You also need to begin a spray program for controlling blackspot on roses. Uncontrolled blackspot will defoliate most hybrid tea, grandiflora and floribunda roses, causing them to

(continued on page 5)

Gardening Events – March, 2019

By Anna Baker, MG

March 2nd - Keep America Beautiful Home & Garden Show, Athens, FairPark Complex, 3356 Hwy. 31. HCMG "Medicinal Herbs 10am, Invasive Species, 11:00am, Composting & Rainwater Harvesting 12:00pm

MARCH 5, 6:00pm, Silver Spur Resort, Canton, TX, Spring Seminar – “Heirloom Gardening in the South – Yesterday’s Plants for Today’s Garden.” Presented by Greg Grant \$20.

FSMG need to register with Extension Office

March 9 Dallas MG - 715 Rowlett Road 9:00-3:00 Teacher Training School Gardens

March 12, Community Garden Clean-up Day, 9:00am, at 503 W. Hwy. 243

March 13, 1:30-3:30pm Word Press Webinars on How To's to Update Your Website, Join AgriLife WebEx meeting: Meeting number: 922 569 625, Meeting password: Qy8VzqPJ

March 14, FSMG Hobby Greenhouses, Don & Pat Taylor

March 15, Smith Co.MG at the Library – 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM
Southern Living Plant Specialist, Southern Gardens

March 16. Wood Co. MG Spring Conference 9:00am-12:00pm, Plant-Grow-Eat, Mineola League of the Arts Facility, 200 W. Blair St., Mineola

March 19, DMG - Sierra Club 7:00-8:00 Earth Kind Landscapes

March 21-10am, FSMG Library Series, Time to Garden with Tommy Phillips, CEA

March 23, DMG - North Haven Gardens 1:00-2:30 EarthKind® Landscape Design

March 16-17, - Collin County - Garden Show 2019

April 25-27, TMGA Conference, Victoria, TX

Advanced Training Offerings in 2019

This information is from the TXMG Web site

Tree Care – March 13-15, 2019,
hosted by Dallas County in Dallas, TX

Turfgrass - March 14-15, 2019,–
hosted by Montgomery County, in Conroe, TX

NEW! Budding & Grafting, April 2-3, – hosted by Waller County, Brookshire

April 12-13, Plant Propagation – hosted by Tarrant County, Ft. Worth

Tree Care – June 12-14, 2019,
hosted by Kerr County, in Kerrville, TX

Earth-Kind® – May 16-18, 2019,
hosted by Henderson County, in Athens, TX

Vegetables – August 13-15, 2019,
hosted by Bexar County, in San Antonio, TX

Greenhouse Management – October 17-19, hosted by Tarrant County, in Ft. Worth

Save these dates!

First Detector #1 – May 2-3, hosted by Ellis County, Waxahachie

First Detector #2 – May 20-21, hosted by Williamson County, Georgetown

Turfgrass – May 23-24, hosted by Montgomery County, Conroe

Vegetables – August 13-15, hosted by Bexar County, San Antonio

Additional Training Opportunities

Training opportunities for Texas Master Gardeners are listed below:

MASTER GARDENER ADVANCED TRAININGS – These workshops provide advanced training whereby a corps of Master Gardeners can obtain a specialization which supports or expands specific county educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. To be eligible for an Advanced Training designation, an individual must possess an up-to-date Master Gardener certification.

EARTH-KIND® TRAINING FOR MASTER GARDENERS – Texas Master Gardeners may select on-line modules to obtain up to 3 hours of re-certification education credits in a calendar year. Each module is worth 1 hour of credit. Master Gardeners are not encouraged to seek re-certification credit for training modules they have completed in previous years.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN STUDY COURSES – These courses provide an opportunity for more in-depth training in landscape design than is normally included in the Master Gardener curriculum. Each course is typically approved by local Master Gardener chapters to qualify for 12 hours of continuing education toward maintaining certification for Master Gardeners.



DALLAS ARBORETUM
AND BOTANICAL GARDEN

The Free State Master Gardeners will have a guided tour through the Dallas Arboretum during Dallas Blooms on Tuesday, March 19th! If you are interested in attending, please contact Shari Curran. The cost is \$20, check payable to her before or at the March meeting.

Sign up for Carpooling/Tour will continue please contact Shari.

We will meet in the Ag Office parking lot at 8:00am and depart for the Gardens. This is a slow walking tour that lasts about 1.5 hours. Wheelchairs are available. Please let Shari know if you need one and it will be reserved at the front gate.

The \$20 cost will include entry, the additional fee for the guide and several dollars to cover parking.

The RAIN DATE is the following Tuesday, March 26th. If the weather looks threatening, we will email everyone the day before, so check your inbox!

Please contact Shari at 903-526-9590 with any questions and bring your cameras!



(continued from March Chores)

decline in vigor.

VEGETABLES

Last freeze dates guide us as to when it should be safe to plant frost-tender vegetables and annuals. Just be ready to protect frost-sensitive plants in case of a late freeze.

Planting of cool-season vegetables (transplant broccoli, cabbage, and collards, and seed carrots, collards, mustard greens, lettuce, radish, turnips, Swiss chard, and spinach) should be finished real soon, and summer vegetables can begin to be sown and transplanted later in March. Delay planting okra, sweet potatoes, okra, and peppers until April since they don't do well in cool soil.

FERTILIZING

Fertilize vegetables about a month after growth starts with nitrogen fertilizer.

Fruit and pecan trees should be fertilized this month with nitrogen applied in the area beneath the ends of the branches, never against the trunk. Shrubs and annual flower beds can be fertilized with a complete, balanced fertilizer. Slow-release formulations, though slightly more expensive, feed your plants over a longer period of time. Often the same type of fertilizer recommended for use on the lawn can be used in the landscape.

Watch out for aphids that rapidly build upon tender new growth. They can be controlled with a sharp stream of water, insecticidal soap or other insecticides (be sure to read the product label to determine whether the infested plants are included on the label).

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 • *"Most standard vegetable varieties sold in stores have been bred for uniform appearance, mechanized harvest, convenience of packing, and a tolerance for hard travel. None of these can be mistaken, in practice, for actual flavor.How did supermarket vegetables lose their palatability, with so many people right there watching? The Case of the Murdered Vegetable was a contract killing, as it turns out, and long distance travel lies at the heart of the plot."*
 •

• From Animal, Vegetable, Miracle by Barbara Kingsolver

Micro Family Farms - Mike Loggins

By Sandra Rosen

"Do you plant bread seeds?" This is just one of the questions from the school kids that Mike Loggins works with that illustrates how so many are disconnected from our food sources. Just one of the many things that Mike does to promote good agriculture and good eating is to work with schools in the Tyler area and help provide "school farms."

Part of his talk was about the history of agriculture. He reminded us that when people learned to save seeds, we went from being foragers and hunters to living in communities and towns. In World War I and World War II, people in the U.S. were called to grow food. Forty percent of all food produced in World War II was produced in people's yards. Then came the herbicides and insecticides and pesticides and large-scale farming was born. Not better, just bigger.

There are 3 kinds of seeds now. The original open-pollinated seeds pollinate by natural means- by birds, by humans, by wind, by insects. The second type is a hybrid cross. This is where the pollen of two species have been crossed by human intervention. Here you may find the plant is disease resistant, drought resistant, or has a longer shelf life. Flavor, however, is at the bottom of this list.

The last type of seed would be those that have DNA modifications, or GMO's. These seeds have had genes from unrelated organisms mixed in and have been banned in some countries, but not in the U.S.

Mike uses both open-pollinated seeds (heirloom) and hybrid cross, but reminded us that the heirlooms have exceptional taste, are nutritious, you can save your own seed, there are wonderful stories to be told about them, and they increase genetic diversity.

He gave us so much information. For example, he told us that sometimes the seeds from Thailand, South Korea, China and other Asian countries have more

in common with our southeast Texas climate than do seeds from Vermont and Idaho. And also plant your seeds twice as deep as the seed itself. And also to find living seeds, soak your seeds in water. The living ones will sink. The dead ones will float. And also try saving tomato seeds from your favorite tomato by laying a slice on potting soil and covering it with a light dusting of soil. If it sprouts, pull up the tomato seedling and pot.

I have been in seminars that were four hours long and taught by people with all sorts of initials after their names and didn't get as much interesting and important information as I got from Mike Loggins in one hour. Awesome!



Spring Planting Guide for Our Area - Zone 8

February 1	Last Plant	Ready	Harvest Length	Depth	Row	Plants
Asparagus	3/15	30 days	60 days	6-8	36-48	18
Cabbage	3/1	60-90 days	40 days	1/2	24-36	14-24
Chinese cabbage	2/15	65-70 days	21 days	1/2	24-36	14-24
Carrots	2/15	70-80 days	21 days	1/2	14-24	2
Turnips	3/1	30-60 days	40 days	1/2	14-24	2-3
Spinach	3/1	40-60 days	40 days	1/2	14-24	3-4
Radish	4/1	25-40 days	7 days	1/2	14-24	1
Lettuce	3/1	40-80 days	21 days	1/2	18-24	2-3
Mustard	3/1	40-80 days	30 days	1/2	14-24	6-12
Onion plants	3/1	80-120 days	40 days	1-2	14-24	2-3
Potatoes	2/15	75-100 days	-	4	30-36	10-15
February 15						
Cauliflower	3/1	70-90 days	14 days	1/2	24-36	14-24
Chard	4/1	45-55 days	40 days	1	18-30	6
Collard/Kale	2/15	50-80 days	60 days	1/2	18-38	6-12
March 1						
Broccoli plants	3/15	60-80 days	40 days	4		
Corn	4/1	70-90 days	10 days	1-2	24-36	9-12
March 15						
Beans bush	4/15	45-60 days	14 days	1-11/2	30-36	3-4
Beans pole	4/15	60-70 days	30 days	1-11/2	36-48	4-6
Lima beans	4/1	65-80 days	14 days	1-11/2	30-36	3-4
Cucumber	4/15	50-70 days	30 days	1/2	48-72	8-12
Cantaloupe	5/1	100 days	30 days	1	60-96	24-36
Squash	4/15	50-60 days	40 days	1-2	60-90	24-48
Tomato	4/1	70-90 days	40 days	1/2	36-48	36-48
Watermelon	5/1	80-100 days	30 days	1-2	72-96	36-72
March 25						
Seedless Watermelon	5/1	80-100 days	30 days	1-2	72-96	36-72
April 1						
Eggplant	4/15	80-90 days	90 days			
Peas Southern	6/1	60-70 days	30 days	2-3	24-36	4-5
Pepper Plants	4/15	60-90 days	90 days	1/2	30-36	18-24
Sweet Potato slips	5/15	100-130 days	— — —	3-5	36-48	12-16
Pumpkin	5/15	75-100 days	— — —	1-2	60-96	36-48
Squash winter	4/15	85-100 days	— — —	1-2	60-96	24-48