

BIRTHDAYS:

Volume 5, Issue 10 Nov./Dec, 2019

November

John Clark, 11/3
Karen Gonzalez, 11/04
Martha Mitchell, 11/12
Mimi Sherwin, 11/15
Tommy Phillips, 11/17
Kathy Brasuell, 11/17
April Trekel, 11/24
Donna Burcham, 11/25
Carter Hallmark, 11/29
Sally Mitchell, 11/30
Bob Williams, 11/30

December

Joy Crabtree, 12/14
Louella Iliff, 12/16

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Ag Day.....	1
President's Message	2
Garden Guru.....	2
Did You Know	2
Nov./Dec. Chores	3
Winter Garden	4
Tomato Town Seminar	4
Garden Events.....	5
Jimmie Pierce, MG	6
Bees Review.....	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
John Womack

Ag Day

By Sharon Palmer

As some of you might know, Ag Day was held out at the Van Zandt County Fairgrounds on October 22 and 23. Mimi Sherwin and Louella Iliff taught the first day, taking turns teaching the 15-minute sessions on edible parts of plants. Carter Hallmark and Sharon Palmer taught the second day, also tag-teaming. There were eight groups of kids one day and ten groups the second day, anywhere from 20-45 kids in a group, so it was quite a good turnout. The kids were handed pictures of plants with magnets on the back and they each took a turn coming up to the front and trying to figure out which part of that plant was edible. They would then put the plant on the magnetic whiteboard in the area that listed which part was edible. Some were pretty tough to figure out. Plants such as sorghum, rhubarb, onion, kohlrabi and potato had them stumped... even some of the adults were at a loss! The kids were so great! I could tell they were having fun engaging in the learning experiences those few days. We had a good response from them and they were actually eager to participate.



President's Message

By Paula Marshall

Walking through spider webs, turning the clock back, chilly mornings, colorful leaves falling gracefully, landing softly on the ground all signal that November is here and that the end of 2019 is coming soon. One would think that these signs signify that a gardener's pace would begin to slow down; however, that is not so for the Free State Master Gardeners.

Many outdoor plants sensitive to cold temps will be hauled inside or to the garage for safekeeping, and because of earlier-than-normal frosts projected, many of us will be rushing out each evening to cover the flowers and vegetables that have just started to look beautiful and produce again after getting a short – very short - reprieve from the hot, dry summer. And, of course, we will need to rush out again in the mornings to haul the little darlings out of the garage and pull their covers off so that they will not get too hot and their tender little stems mashed to pieces.

Many of us will try to slip as many cold weather vegetable transplants into the garden as there is room for, and plant the lettuce and radish seed that is left over from last spring. And then, because all of the gardening experts and magazines say so, we will feel the need to winterize the garden so that, come February, when gardening begins all over again, we won't have to work so hard. Really? To quote one of the characters from "Laugh In", I think, or maybe it was the Smothers Brothers, "What are you....NUTS?". Yep.

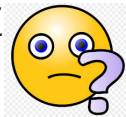
Yes, MG activities just keep rolling along: parking cars at Trade Days is scheduled for November 2nd, the November 14 member meeting program will be presented by Hillcrest Iris & Daylily Gardens in Dallas (assuming their property was not destroyed by the late October tornado), and Bob Williams will present the last library series program at 5:30 p.m., November 21, on fruit and nut trees.

Our new class of interns – 17 of them! – will meet for an introductory meeting with Tommy and Becky on November 13th, and we can't wait for them to become a part of the FSMGs. They all seem to be dynamic people with diverse and interesting backgrounds and we look forward to what they will bring to our association.

Becky and Sally are starting to schedule 2020 program speakers, so if there is a subject you would like to have featured, please contact them asap. Also, if you have heard a speaker at another event whom you think would be a good one for our group, please let Becky and Sally know that as well.

In addition, the annual Awards dinner is scheduled for December 12 for members and their spouses or significant others. The time and place will be announced later but please get the date on your calendar so that you don't forget. We hope that every member will be there to celebrate all that has been accomplished this year. Don't forget to get your hours posted on the texasvolunteersystem.org website so that you will be eligible for the "most volunteer hours" award.

Take a breath, enjoy the cool temperatures and beautiful colors that surround us this time of the year, and I hope to see all of you at the November meeting. (I wonder if the "experts" who tell us to winterize our gardens, winterize theirs?)



Paula

Garden Guru



Dear Garden Guru - Are there any perennial seeds that I could plant now and get a head start on spring flowers?

Yes, there are many perennial seeds that can be planted now. Actually, the goal for planting in the fall is not to have your seeds germinate, but to give them a period of stratification, exposing them to cold and moist conditions. The alternating freeze and thaw conditions help break down the seed coat and start the growing process. Plant at depth according to package instructions and plant after the first frost, but before the ground freezes. Some seeds that do well for fall planting include: Black-eyed Susan, Penstemon, sunflower, pincushion flower, prairie coneflower, purple coneflower, and wild columbine.

Our Thyme Farm



12 oz. Honey Bears \$6.00

Half/Pint Jams & Jellies
\$4.00

Soap \$4.00 ea. or 3/\$10.00

Call or Text 330-801-3180
Or Message on Facebook
Nancy Szabo

Great Stocking Stuffers!

Did You Know. . . Becky Hettinger

- ❖ Pine trees-pine cones have genders-female cones make seeds-male cones shed pollen.
- ❖ 3 trillion trees currently exist on the planet.
- ❖ Earth now has 46 per cent fewer trees than 12,000 years ago.
- ❖ Earth has more than 60,000 known trees species.
- ❖ An average size tree can provide enough wood to make 170,000 pencils.
- ❖ Earth was home to fungi that grew 26ft. tall before trees.
- ❖ A large oak tree can consume about 100 gallons of water per day and a giant sequoia can consume up to 500 gallons daily.
- ❖ Most trees-pine have tap roots, and most roots are in the top 18 inches of soil, where growing conditions tend to be better.

November/December Gardening Chores

Tommy Phillips

County Extension Agent, Ag/NR

Night time temperatures in the 40's and day time temperatures ranging from the 50's to the mid 70's and put into the mix 2-3 freezes - our plants are ALL confused! Rest assured fall is here and winter is surely not far behind. There are some gardening chores that can be done now to insure success in 2020.

- Don't forget to give your landscape a steady amount of water, through irrigation or by hand, if there is not adequate rain. I really don't think we have much to worry about right now.
- As soon as the November weather appears to be settled, it is time to select and plant such annuals as pansies, violas and ornamental cabbages and kale.
- Plan now for your spring flowering season with a mixture of annuals and perennials.
- Don't get in a hurry to prune woody plants. Late December through February is usually the best time to prune them.
- Place orders for seeds this month so you will have them available when you are ready to plant. By ordering early, you will be more certain of getting the varieties you want. In addition to ordering seeds that you are already familiar with, try a few new kinds each year to broaden your garden contents.
- November through February is a good time to plant trees and shrubs.
- Bring in late-blooming plants such as decorative kalanchoes or Christmas cactus so they may finish flowering in the warmth of the house.
- Reduce the fertilization of indoor plants from late October to mid-March. An exception would be plants in an atrium or a well lighted window.
- Drain gasoline from power tools and run the engine until fuel in the carburetor is used up.
- Drain and store garden hoses and watering equipment in a readily accessible location. The lawn and plants may need water during a prolonged dry spell.
- Continue to set out cool-season bedding plants, such as pansies, violas, stock, snapdragons, and dianthus.
- Prepare beds and individual holes for rose planting in January and February. Use composted manure, pine bark, and similar materials mixed with existing soil.
- Use good pruning practices when selecting Christmas greenery from landscape plants. Don't destroy the natural form and beauty of the plant.
- Prolong the life of holiday-season gift plants by providing proper care. Check to see if the pot wrap has plugged up the bottom drainage. Don't over water. Keep out of drafts from heating vents and opening doorways. Fertilizer is seldom needed the first few months.
- Take advantage of good weather to prepare garden beds for spring planting. Work in any needed organic matter, and have beds ready to plant when needed.
- Don't forget tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator. They can be planted any time in December if they have received 60 or more days of chilling.
- Want to start cuttings of your favorite Christmas cactus? As soon as it has finished blooming, select a cutting with 4 or 5 joints, break or cut it off, and insert the basal end into a pot of moderately moist soil. Place it on a windowsill or other brightly lit area. The cuttings should be rooted within 3 to 4 weeks.
- Don't spare the pruning shears when transplanting bare-rooted woody plants. Cut the tops back at least one-third to one-half, to compensate for the roots lost when digging the plant.
- Take advantage of bad weather and holiday time to study seed and nursery catalogs as well as good gardening books.
- Berrying plants, such as holly and yaupon, may be pruned now while they can be enjoyed as cut material inside the house

For more gardening and horticulture related information, please contact the Van Zandt County Extension office at (903) 567-4149.

The Winter Garden

By Sandra Rosen

For many of us, even though we are Master Gardeners, the term “winter garden” seems like an oxymoron. Who would want a winter garden and what could you do if you did want one? Well, surprisingly, there are some things to do that will give pleasure in the winter garden.

First, winterizing the landscape and the vegetable plot will make it so much better through the winter and make it so much easier to get started in the spring. You already know what to do: pull weeds, dead plants need to go, add compost to plants, then mulch to provide winter cover. In addition, you can divide perennials and dig up bulbs and store them in a container and cover with sawdust, sand, perlite, or vermiculite. And be sure that the soil around your plants has plenty of residual moisture.

In addition, there are some plants that flower in the winter, usually fall through spring. Some are the calendulas, also known as the pot marigold; pansies; English primrose; Winter jasmine; Hellebores; camellia; crocus; dogwood; and daffodil.

Attract birds to your yard. A blue bird house is all you need to attract blue birds to your yard. The baby blue birds will need some open space in front of the house so that they can practice flying from their home. All the birds will appreciate seeds and water, and if you have some berries on some of your bushes, that will be an added treat for the birds. If you don't have some berry bushes, now may be a good time to plant some. Some good ones are the red chokeberry, coralberry, Yaupon holly, Possumhaw holly, American beautyberry, and Buford holly.

Your winter yard doesn't have to be dreary. Twinkling lights don't have to be just for the holidays. Some lights draped through the trees in your yard will make even wintry January seem festive. In addition, some herbs that do well in cold weather are dill, cilantro, chives, arugula, and parsley. And why not try some edible landscaping this winter with the cold weather vegetables. Colorful Swiss Chard would surely brighten up some dull spots in your landscape. So don't just winterize your yard and shut it down. Make it an always pleasant place to see and enjoy!



Tomato Town Program – Henderson County

By Paula Marshall

I attended the “Tomato Town” seminar at the Athens Country Club, on Saturday, October 26th. The program was put on by the Henderson County Master Gardeners and featured four speakers, Skip Richter (Houston CEA and writer for Texas Gardener Magazine), Erfan Vafaie, who has spoken to our group several times (IPM, Overton), Tom Leroy who is the first extension agent to start a Master Gardeners program in Texas in 1979 in Montgomery County, and Bill Adams (author of several books about vegetables, including “The Texas Tomato Lover’s Handbook” and Harris County EA Emeritus).

All of these gentlemen are a wealth of information. Here are some things I learned about the “*Lycopersicon esculentum*”:

Any plant with the botanical term “*esculentum*” in the name is edible.

It is thought that the tomatoes originated in the Andes Mountains in South America, and were first eaten by the Aztec Indians around 700 A.D.

Thomas Jefferson started growing tomatoes at Monticello in the late 1700's/early 1800's.

Europeans declined to eat the tomato in the 1700's because it was a member of the nightshade family and a shiny red color. They thought it was poisonous. It was labeled the “poison apple”. However, when it started to appear in seed catalogs in the 1820's, it became known as a sort of panacea – it was even advertised to be an aphrodisiac.

Honey bees do not pollinate tomatoes because they cannot get to the pollen and the flowers do not produce nectar. Bumble bees and other kinds of bees help to pollinate tomatoes because they can shake the plant.

Heirlooms are hard to grow in Texas because our growing season is not long enough. It gets too hot too fast. However, Richter has had “pretty good luck with” the Porter tomato and JD's Special C Tex.

Both Richter and Adams touted getting tomato plants in the ground as early as possible and protecting them with cages made from cattle panels wrapped in row cover. Make sure to read the amount of days to harvest when choosing tomato variety (70 days or less, but this is a Houston guy, so less is better for us here).

When growing seedlings indoors, red/blue range of lights are best – LED's if possible, as close to the plants as possible. A sunny window is just not enough of the right kind of light.

Feed tomatoes profusely! ¼ to ½ C. complete fertilizer (such as Osmocote) when planting, or if using organic, double the dose; when 1st cluster of blooms appear, 2-3 TBSP of high nitrogen around the plant and water in. Skip has an article about growing tomatoes in Jan/Feb issue of Texas Gardener.

Skip Richter spoke of conducting a taste test to determine if refrigerated tomatoes lose their flavor. Using two halves of the same tomato, the taste test revealed that after the refrigerated tomato reached room temperature it was as tasty as the tomato half that had not been refrigerated.

Many varieties were recommended by the speakers. If you would like to know what they are, just let me know. These programs are always informative so make the effort to attend them whenever you possibly can.

Gardening Events – November, December, 2019

Nov. 2 - The Official Opening of the Longview Arboretum, Free & Open to the Public, donations appreciated. 706 W. Cotton St. (44.14 mi) Longview, Texas 75608, (903) 237-1398

Nov. 5 - 12:00-1:00pm First Tuesday in the Garden, IDEA Garden at Tyler Rose Garden, 420 Rose Park Dr. Free and Open to the Public, Shade Gardening and a tour of the Shade Garden.

Nov. 14 - FSMG Reg. Meeting, Van Zandt County Library 9:00am. Iris & Day lilies, Hillcrest Iris & Daylily Gardens, Hooker Nichols

Nov. 21 - FSMG Library Series, 5:30pm Fruit & Nut Trees, Bob Williams, MG

Nov. 29, 30 & Dec. 1 - Annual Thanksgiving Sale, Blue Moon Gardens, 20% off all plants, garden art and gifts.

Dec. 7 - Luminary's at the nursery - Blue Moon Gardens shopping by candlelight with refreshments and specials.

Dec. 12 - 2019 FSMG Awards Dinner, Time and Place TBD to be announced. (Get your hours entered on texasvolunteersystem.org)

There will be no newsletter in December -- *Happy Holidays Everyone!*

For information about the state conference May 12 through the 14th, visit txmg.org



From the Fruit, Nut and Vegetable Conference in Tyler, Texas

By Sandra Rosen

We are so fortunate in East Texas to have so many people who study and learn about planting and then are willing to share that information with the rest of us. Through constantly educating themselves and through trial and error studies, they obtain information on planting in our area that makes life easier for the rest of us. There were 4 such people at the Fruit, Nut and Vegetable Conference in Tyler, Texas, this year.

The first speaker was Dr. David Creech from Stephen F. Austin State University. From Dr. Creech we learned about blueberries and that:

1. Blueberries need acid soil, full sun, organic matter, and high-quality irrigation.
2. There are no chill varieties, as well as low chill and mid chill varieties.
3. Check your soil and water supply for sodium. Lots of sodium is not good for blueberries.
4. You can grow blueberries in a container.
5. One blueberry bush will yield 20 pounds of blueberries.

The next speaker was Greg Grant, Smith County Agri-Life agent. From him we learned that:

1. Another great site for information, besides the aggie horticulture site, was Jerry Parson's Plant Answers www.plantanswers.com
2. The three biggest problems for our gardeners are: not enough sunlight, not enough fertilizer, and planting at the wrong site.
3. Compost is not a fertilizer.
4. There are actually few heirloom tomato plants that will grow in Texas. We mostly grow determinate tomatoes here because of the heat.
5. Hot season plants will tolerate our 90 degree heat. Some of those plants are okra, asparagus, peas, peppers, rosemary, and sweet potatoes.

The next speaker was Michael Cook, a Viticulture specialist for our area. From him we learned about Texas wines and that:

1. 80% of the grapes grown in Texas are grown in West Texas.
2. The challenges of growing grapes in Texas include: Pierce's Disease, other pests and diseases, spring frosts, and excess rain.
3. Grapes are grown for wine, but also for table fruit.
4. Muscadines are the toughest, most disease resistant grape for our area.
5. Grapes need full sunlight and good air flow.

And from our own Tommy Phillips, we learned about Fruit and Nut Trees and that:

1. These three things were most important: variety selection, soil drainage, and sunlight.
2. It is extremely important where you buy your trees. Buy from someone local – trees that are grown in our area.
3. Pruning is important to obtain larger fruits.
4. There is no need to fertilize pear trees and only lightly fertilize grapes and figs.
5. The pecan meat is made between July 1 and August 15. Trees must have plenty of water during this time.

Jimmie Pierce, Master Gardener

By Joan Driver



This month I'm giving my space to Jimmie Pierce, who did such a wonderful job of telling her own story that there was little to edit. So here's Jimmie, in her own exuberant, happy words –

Master Gardeners. For years I had heard of them but had never met one, or so I thought. Little did I know that I grew up with master gardeners all around me. My mother, my grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins. . . everyone gardened. But my grandmother was my real inspiration. As a child, I would follow her around her yard and ask her the names of every flower. She knew them all! I told myself that when I grew up I was going to

know all about plants too.

I grew up in northeast Arkansas. My dad was a rice and soybean farmer and my mother a housewife. There were five children in the family. College brought me to Texas where I met my future husband, a special education teacher. We have two daughters, Rachel and Amanda, and four grandchildren.

When I read that there would be Master Gardener classes in Canton, I interviewed and signed up immediately. My hope was to learn, make new friends, and serve the community. Vegetable and wildflower gardening are my main interests, but I hope to learn more about native plants and using them in the landscape.

My advice for any new gardener is to read, research, study the specific needs of a plant that you are interested in growing before you bring it into your yard or garden. I've learned the hard way that you can love a plant to death with too much water or not enough sunlight.

Review of Libaray Series on 'Bees'

By Becky Hettinger

Beeswax is the miracle of the beehive. This was the focus of our November library series with Beth Derr from Harrison county. Beth was introduced to bees by her husband which in turn got him unknowingly signed up for the master beekeeping classes offered by Texas A&M.

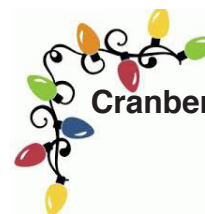
To be a master beekeeper you must first become a master gardener which Beth accomplished and 3 years later has the dubious honor as being an expert of yellow stripey stingy things.

Beth in her own witty way had facts and amazing information to share with those attending the meeting. She also brought products that had been been made from the hive along with demonstrating how to make an easy quick hand cream from only a few products and not alot of time involved.

Beth did inform the group about where most of the counterfeit honey is being imported from, guiding us on which countries of origin to buy from and not to throw honey away when the substance crystallizes.

One important conversation about buying organic honey, there is no such animal. Your immediate flower field may be organic but these little critters fly 4-8 miles away and no telling where they get their pollen from. So let it be said don't pay big bucks for the word organic on the jar.

Bees are now deemed as an agricultural exemption because the honey bee produces a food. Honey is sugar.



Cranberry Relish/Salsa

- 1 12-oz. pkg. of frozen cranberries
- 1/4 to 1/3 c. sugar
- 2-3 green onions, chopped
- 1 jalapeno, chopped
- 1 T. lemon juice
- 1 T. fresh ginger, grated
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1/4 c. fresh cilantro

Combine all vegetables and chop, either by hand or using a food processor. Then add salt, sugar and lemon juice. Toss to combine. (I always remove the jalapeno seeds and membrane to keep it from being too hot.)



**Free State
Master Gardeners
Free Public
Fall Library Series**

Growing Fruit & Pecan Trees 101

with **Robert Williams, MG**

**How to Plan, Plant and Maintain
Fruit & Pecan Trees**

**Thursday
November 21
5:30 PM**

Van Zandt Co. Library
Buchanan Room
317 1st Monday Lane
Canton, TX 75103



TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION