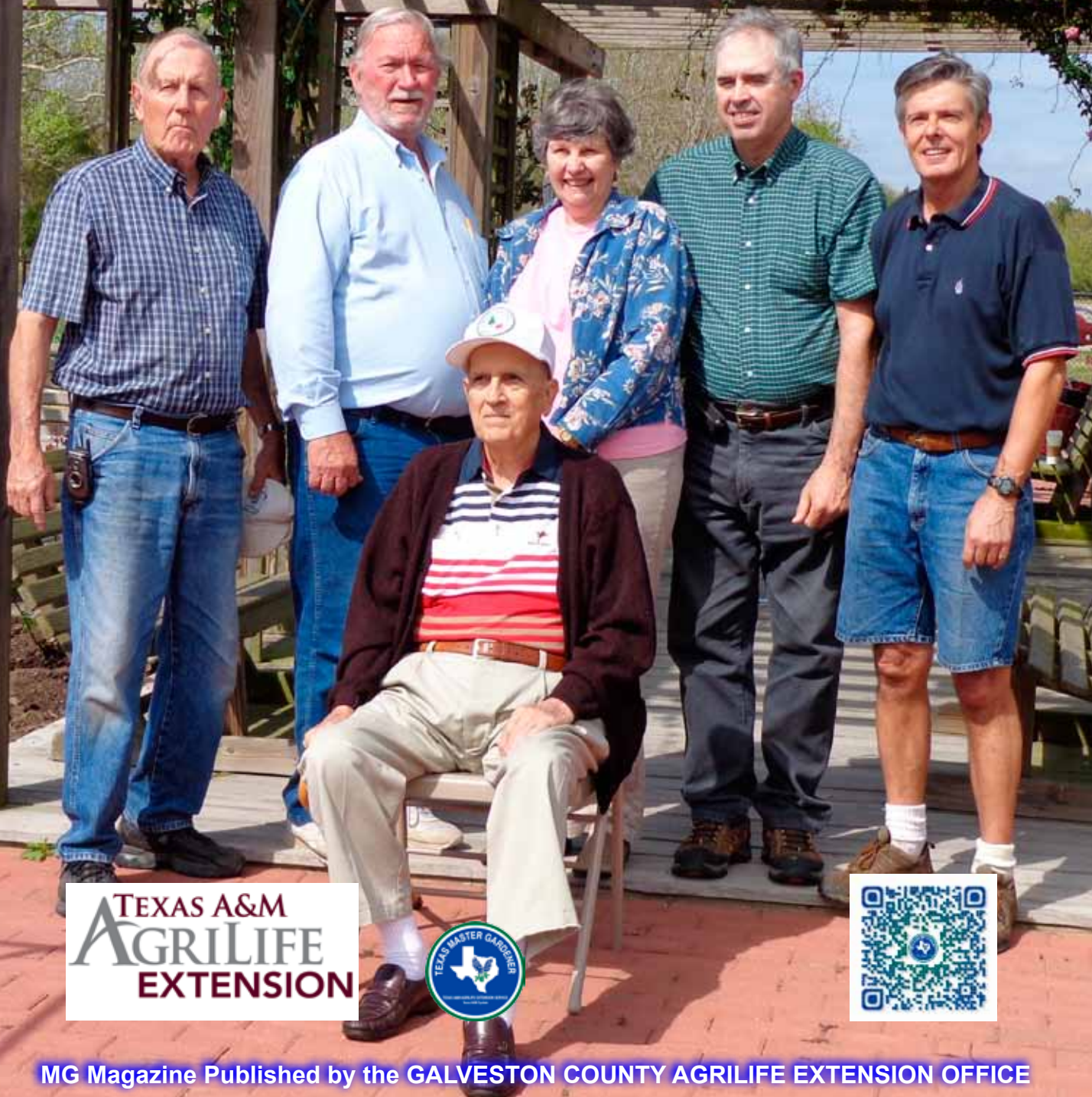


# THE GALVESTON COUNTY Master Gardeners

Issue 184 - April/May 2013

*Commemorative Issue 1982-2013*

Thirty-one Years of Community Service



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**WHAT YEAR WAS IT?** *The first CD player for consumers was released by Sony; Time Magazine named the Computer as the person of year; Epcot Center at Disney World opened to the public; the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial occurred; Henry Fonda, Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly and Bess Truman died; all 9 planets, on March 10, aligned on the same side of the Sun (into a state of Syzygy) and our Galveston County Master Gardener Program began!*



*By Camille Goodwin  
MG 2008*

Well I'm not sure that it took that specific celestial event for the Galveston County Master Gardener Program to commence but someone sure had a great idea in the year 1982! Here we are in what seems like a short-time later, 2013 celebrating 30 years of service and outreach to our Galveston County and beyond community. Congratulations and Happy Anniversary to all GCMGs whose dedication makes this one of the largest, most dynamic, active, award winning and successful Master Gardening organizations in the State of Texas. Our MG Association began a few years after the start of the MG Program, in 1986, when a few GCMGs put some organization to the group and we've been crazy busy in our community and growing ever since.

Have you seen the bumper sticker "I wasn't born in Texas, but I got here as soon as I could"? That's how I feel about our GCMG organization. I wasn't here for the beginning, but as I got closer to retiring in 2008, the first thing I wanted to do was take a Master Gardening course. I'd been thinking about it for years. I chose to apply to the Galveston County program because I retired in January and their classes began in February! I wasn't sure they'd take me as so many apply and I live in Harris County. All worked out, the Texas A&M Course was way beyond exceptional and I received my MG Certification in 2009. From my perspective, it was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

I've gained so much horticultural knowledge and have been able to participate in many exciting fun projects. Beginning with a small team of four new friends I met during my MG course, one was worldly and fabulously educated in Japanese style gardens. She guided the team in the planning, development, and building of the beautiful Asian Garden, now in our Demonstration Garden. Additionally, I'm on our vibrant newsletter team and have gotten the chance to participate in the rapid evolution of the newsletter to its current electronic format, now available seemingly "world-wide" to anyone who would like to receive it. This team is self-starting and meets monthly to plan and improve every issue. I have written or edited many educational topics on our GCMG website and some publications. You all usually only see the final publication—it's a labor of love to actually get one to the final stage. Without the assistance of the Extension staff, other "topic" expert MGs, Dr. Johnson and our photo library, they wouldn't come to life. I have learned no matter where you volunteer in our organization, a lot is going on and a tremendous amount gets accomplished, by volunteers!

Every MG gravitates to an area(s) they like (I like many). I've learned each distinct area has its own culture and self-directed, diverse, personalities supporting it. Each area is like a train running smoothly down a track that contributes to the whole. The MGs involved with the new intern classes really enjoy supporting and encouraging our "newbies" and want them to feel welcome.

Visit the Demonstration Garden on a Thursday workday and you'll hear the construction guys going at it with new buildings, you'll see others building new structures for garden beds, you'll hear gregarious laughing coming out of the orchard and vegetable garden areas, you'll feel the excitement of the MGs designing the new water-smart garden in the north end, you'll see other MGs just quietly maintaining beautiful gardens and you'll smell lunch! What you will also see is the total joy radiating from each MG doing something they absolutely love to do, have knowledge of and are willing to share that knowledge with anyone who asks.

Nearly 100 MGs come out in support of our two annual plant sales. A knowledgeable, dedicated group of MGs work our community phone bank. When you think about it, it's truly amazing what this varied group of volunteers accomplishes. I'm glad the GCMGs class is held in February—otherwise, I'm not sure where I'd be!

Here's to the next 30 years—I'm ready—  
Let's get started!!



The King and the Prez

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Front cover photo - MG Presidents, Past and Present: L to R MGs Jim Edwards '96 (served '98 to Present), Herman Auer '83 ('90-'91), Anna Wygrys '93 ('95-'97, Larry Baker '92 ('94), MG Board President John Jons '03, and seated is Sam Scarcella '86 ('86-'89)

Photo by Tom Fountain, Barbara Hankins and Laura Bellmore



<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Galveston-County-Master-Gardeners/220088841395231>

## How to Reach Us



### Extension Office:

Phone. . . . 281-534-3413, ext. 1-2

E-Mail. . . . . galv3@wt.net

### To Submit Newsletter Articles:

Contact Linda Steber

Phone . . . . . 281-534-6695

E-Mail . . . . steber8@msn.com

We encourage your articles!

Due the 20th of each month.

### To Send Volunteer Hours:

E-Mail. . . . . mghours@wt.net

### Speakers Bureau:

Contact Cindy Croft

Phone . . . . . 281-332-9501

E-Mail

garden.speakers@gmail.com



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## Ask a Master Gardener



*Gulf Coast Gardening* seminar



Diagnosing Samples with a Stereomicroscope



Pruning Demonstration in Demo Garden for the Public



Accepting Weed Submission



MGs Rachel Montemayor and Loretta Osteen on the Master Gardener Hotline



Insect Collection

# Our Primary Product is Information

## Q&A

Question: "I just moved here—what are some of the services that the Extension Office and Master Gardeners offer?"



By Laurel Stine  
MG 2002

**T**hat question is an example that gives an overview to the horticulture-related questions and problems the public brings to us here at the Extension Office. At Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, Galveston County, our primary product is information. Our mandate is to provide impartial, valid information to the public. We are not obligated to any commercial endorsements, and make our recommendations based on scientific research and data. We provide that information in many different ways:

**Seminars and Demonstrations** - Forty-six *Gulf Coast Gardening* programs were provided during the 2012 calendar year and covered a diverse range of topics including Honey Extraction and Growing Tomatoes from Seed. Most presenters are local MGs, and information is always available at our office. Upcoming seminars are listed on the Galveston County Master Gardener website.

**The Master Gardener Hotline** - The Hotline is manned by volunteers who work in shifts on a regular basis. When they are unsure of an answer, they have reference material from A&M, locally produced material and a large group of experts who they can seek for advice.

**In-House Diagnosis of Horticultural Problems** - Many gardening problems such as identification of plants, diseases and insects require a physical sample. Members of the general public may bring in physical samples. We are fortunate to have a laboratory with a dissecting stereomicroscope, along with equipment to handle and mail submissions that are brought in. If we cannot provide an exact identification of either a problem or the name of a particular disease or insect, we can mail those to scientists at Texas A&M. Each submission is documented and given a number. The sample, pertinent information and diagnosis are written down and then entered in a spreadsheet. These spreadsheets can then be searched to determine what types of problems people are encountering in Galveston County.

**Soil Samples** - Soil samples are tested in a lab at Texas A&M University. Results from these soil tests give information that help with decisions on fertilization without overfertilization. Our role is to provide information and materials for mailing.

**How We Link to A&M Information** - For the public, this pattern of communications links A&M research to Dr. Johnson, to us and to the public. Some of the information is easily available to the public through the Galveston County Master Gardeners website which is hosted on Extension's Aggie Horticulture server. All of us use these resources before we answer any question (unless Dr. Johnson is standing somewhere close to us!).

**How YOU Can Link to A&M Information** - You can always ask us, we like that. But, if you are just curious about a topic, try a search using "Texas Extension" in your search window. You can fill a whole day finding an unbelievable amount of accurate information.

Just be sure to check the 'dates', remember, the Internet doesn't sort that for you.

**Other Internet Connections** - The Internet has become a primary tool. We have two computers in the volunteer room for use by the Master Gardeners. With the Internet, research can be done in a matter of minutes. We can now save libraries of "links" (Internet addresses) to valuable websites, ready at a moment's notice to be visited and read. I myself have a folder of literally hundreds of links, built up over my time here, which I put on the Master Gardener computers. Other Master Gardeners have their collections of links, as well. If we don't already have a link, savvy searching of the Internet will often bring one up. In keeping with our practice of providing valid information, we use reputable websites, such as universities and scientific organizations, to obtain our knowledge.

**Locally Produced Publications** - We also have a comprehensive digital library of Galveston County Master Gardener publications, newsletters and magazines, and publications from our various presentations. All photos in these publications are taken by Master Gardeners and are part of a Digital Photo Library. Thanks to the efforts of a diligent team of Master Gardeners, approximately 35,000 photos have been sorted into 50 categories. This has become an invaluable source of information for the gardening public.

**Insect Identification and Collection** - We have a wonderful collection which is grouped according to Family. At last count it contained 1300+ specimens. These are used for insect identification for programs and workshops to the community. These are preserved and stored in the lab.

**Demonstration and Research at Carbide Park** - Our offices are on the grounds of Carbide Park in La Marque, Texas. We have a research and demonstration garden, but sometimes use the whole grounds for research. Targeted research has been done on fire ants, pine bark beetles and cactus moths.

**MG Extension Staff** - Three of the horticulture staff at the Extension Office are also Master Gardeners: Laura Bellmore, who works full time, Sandra Devall, and myself, who work part time on Tuesdays and Thursdays. They are happy to share their knowledge.

Sandra Devall designs the locally-produced publications and documents, coordinates and trains the MG writers, digital photo library committee members and serves on several committees related to these resources.

Laura Bellmore is Dr. Johnson's executive assistant and uses her broad gardening background to help others.

My primary job is in-house diagnosis of horticultural problems.

Under Dr. Johnson's leadership, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, Galveston County, has become an outstanding asset for our gardening public. We have grown with the needs and new technology—it's about getting out accurate information to the community.





By Barbara White  
MG 2011

Galveston County

# Junior Master Gardeners

*Edited by Pat Forke, MG 2010*

The Junior Master Gardener (JMG) program was conceived and implemented by Extension personnel in the Department of Horticulture at Texas A&M University almost two decades ago. The JMG program is a fun youth gardening program modeled after the highly successful adult Master Gardener program. It offers horticultural and environmental science education through creative gardening activities. JMG activities provide underserved kids an opportunity to connect with nature, to promote lifelong healthy eating habits and to enhance social skills.

Twenty-eight states have now implemented JMG programs and Texas A&M University serves as national headquarters. Today JMG is an international youth gardening program associated with the University Extension Network. Several national organizations are also JMG affiliates committed to the shared JMG program mission.

The JMG mission is "To grow good kids by igniting a passion for learning, success and service through a unique gardening education." An organization can be formed in several ways: as a community club with parental participation and project leaders, as a community club with concentration on one project at a time, as a school that incorporates the curriculum into various subjects, as a community partnership at a school with lead volunteers managing the club, and in other informal education settings.

The JMG core curriculum is directed at third, fourth and fifth grade students yet flexible enough for kindergarten through middle school students. There are eight chapters with 44 teaching concepts. To become a certified Junior Master Gardener a child must complete 88 activities and 8 projects. The activities are divided, 44 with the group and 44 as an individual. Upon completion of the activities eight community service/ leadership projects must be completed.

Historically, Galveston County Master Gardeners have provided outreach in our community to schools. The school or club provides a teacher/leader and a Master Gardener or several Master Gardeners serve(s) as co-leaders. Each JMG group can be as unique as it chooses.

One of the longest running JMG program in Galveston County is conducted on private property in Kemah. This is a community-based program which is open to all children of the community. The founder was able to secure donations to start the program and Girl Scouts, neighborhood children and other volunteers maintain the garden. In addition to vegetables and fruit trees, this group maintains a butterfly garden at the San Leon lighthouse.

In 2013, Dr. Johnson turned this program over to Barbara White (MG 2011). Barbara approached several schools in Galveston and is now working with two schools and hopes to include more. When Barbara began working with Ambassador Preparatory Academy, the students were attempting to grow lemons from seeds using various methods of propagation. They chose lemons because many of the students are participating in the National Lemonade Day Program coming in May. They also purchased three lemon trees to begin planting what will one day be an orchard on their campus.



At this time, the students are rejuvenating several beds on their campus as Barbara teaches them about soil preparation and weeding. Their goal is to plant a butterfly garden when the beds are ready.

Barbara is using this opportunity to teach the students about weed control, amending soil, and choosing suitable plants for the butterflies and our coastal area. Barbara goes every Thursday afternoon to work with the young gardeners and would be most happy to have help from other Master Gardeners.

Another Galveston school that Barbara approached is the KIPP Elementary Charter School. Barbara is working with them to help establish a youth gardening program. Beds have been prepared and planted with different vegetables in each of the ten beds. The children help with weeding and watering by following a garden maintenance calendar. The calendar allows all the students a chance to participate from planting to harvest. Barbara says there is a specific need right now for volunteers on Bolivar as the children there are establishing a wild life habitat. Sharon and Dr. Don Wilkerson have also provided significant support toward the KIPP JMG initiative.

Barbara has graciously volunteered to be our Junior Master Gardener Program Liaison and she says it has taught her a valuable lesson. As she began working in this program she felt the passion for gardening. Now, she says, after working with the children, she feels the passion for teaching children about gardening. Nothing, she says, can describe the joy of seeing the children's faces light up when they discover something about gardening.

Barbara would like to extend an invitation to all Galveston County Master Gardeners for assistance to ensure that JMG programs in Galveston County ascend to the same stellar level as our other GCMG programs.

## Garden Tours Available

# Total Aspect of the Demo Garden



By Robert Marshall  
MG 2012

**H**ave you ever been told that plant just will not grow here, only to find out it does? Have you spent large sums of money on plants only to have them die? Sounds like you should come visit the Galveston County Master Gardeners' Demo Garden at Carbide Park.

You will be able to see various types of raised beds for growing vegetables or flowers and ask questions of Master Gardeners as they work on those beds. Maybe you would like to tour the orchard or the serenity garden. See what fruit trees can grow here. You don't have enough room to plant that fruit tree in the yard? Do you crave fresh blueberries in the spring but not sure which plants to buy or how to plant them?

Whatever your choice, it is just a matter of coming by and taking a tour while Master Gardeners are on hand to help with your tour and answer questions. If you have visited the old demonstration garden in Dickinson, then you will be surprised to find the new demo garden has grown to contain over three acres of planted real estate.

If you have wanted to know how to build a raised bed for your favorite plants, you can see raised beds constructed from lumber, bricks, or even concrete. You will be able to ask questions about drip irrigation of plants in the garden. Ask our construction experts for advice on how to build that bed you have always wanted.

Learn when Master Gardeners are planting, when to start your seeds so they are ready to go in the ground in time to get that harvest before summer starts cooking it on the vine.

Visit the orchard for tips on citrus, apples, and other fruit and nut trees and what chill hours are required to make them fruit in our area. Visit the apricot tree with almost a dozen other stone fruits grafted onto limbs on the tree. No room in your back yard? Do you have a blank wall on your house or a section of fence open? Check out the espalier bed to find out ways to get the most from your space.

If your feet are tired after wandering through the garden for an hour or so and you want to sit and rest for a few minutes, relax in the serenity garden before moving on to view some plants that do well in our area that can be used for landscaping your yard. The drought-tolerant plant garden is still under construction, but the Master Gardeners who are working on that bed can help answer questions about what is planned for it.

Master Gardeners are always happy to discuss the latest methods of growing plants and their success and failures while experimenting with those methods.

Guided tours for "Garden with the Masters" are offered the first Thursday of each Month at 9:00 am. Self guided tours are available other Thursdays in each month from 9:00-11:00 am.

If you attend a **Gulf Coast Gardening** educational program for a Saturday presentation, a tour of our demo gardens for a small group can be arranged after the session ends.



Photos By MG Barbara Hankins

Master Gardeners are on site at the Demo Garden answering questions at recent tours





By Donna J. Ward  
MG 1996

## Finally a Mass of Blooms

# Trowels & Tribulations in a Suburan Garden

*Editor's Note: This is a reprint from Donna's article for La Ventana Del Lago, the City of El Lago's neighborhood newspaper.*

**A**pril is the month when Mother Nature shows us her soft and gentle side, and departs from the harsh persona she exhibits during January and February. She is a real lady this month and next, and all the blossoms she presents to us prove that she does have an amiable and tender disposition. With her cooperation, your garden is finally a mass of blooms, the result of your past labors. All of those sweet peas, petunias and snapdragons are begging to be cut and brought indoors where they can be enjoyed—which incidentally has the side effect of prolonging their bloom time.

But we all want color to continue into the hot summer months, so it's time to plant seeds of heat-tolerant, sun-loving annuals such as marigolds, zinnias, periwinkles, coral vine, and transplants of hibiscus, copper plants and plumbago, to mention just a few. One of my favorite sun-lovers is melampodium; you may find it labeled as 'black-foot daisy.' It adores our hot summers, and produces gazillions of white or yellow one-inch diameter daisy-like blossoms. It grows twelve to eighteen inches tall, and makes a great back planting for shorter specimens. It is an annual, but self-seeds prolifically.

For those shady areas you might consider impatiens (always my go-to plant for a spot of almost instant color), pentas, coleus and good ol' dependable begonias.

Usually we plant caladiums at Easter, but it was a bit early this year, so you can get them in the ground now. They don't appreciate cold soil, and the bulbs tend to rot under those conditions. Remember that the greens and whites do well in shade, while the reds can take some sun. If you want the leaves to be bigger than normal, use your potato peeler or paring knife to take out some of the smaller 'eyes'—the larger eyes will produce larger foliage. Take the Easter lily out of its pot and put it in the ground—you'll enjoy their glossy white trumpets for years—although not necessarily at Easter.

Those new landscape trees you put in the ground this fall or winter are showing new growth—and a light feeding of a 15-5-10 would be appreciated. Be sure to mulch around these new specimens so they will not be too stressed by the inescapable summer heat, and they'll grow significantly faster than those surrounded by lawn grasses or bare ground. Two or three inches deep is fine, just remember that the mulch should not touch the trunk.

You wanted to do it last month, and it was hard to restrain yourself I know, but as long as you have that bag of 15-5-10 handy give in and feed the St. Augustine which is now actively growing. You'll actually be feeding the grass, not cool weather weeds. Please don't get me started on my annual rant and rave about 'weed and feed' formulations—these fertilizers are non-selective and target your trees and shrubs with the same ferocity as they target weeds. St. Augustine is a native Gulf Coast grass, and if it's healthy it will choke out weeds.

Chances are you pruned and fed the azaleas when they quit performing the last of March. You'll be right on schedule if you give them their second feeding the end of this month. If you have any other spring blooming shrubs that have stopped blooming, take the pruners to them also.

Chances are, some of your ancestors were farmers, and chances are you've inherited the inclination to grow some veggies for your own table. Well, channel your Grandpa and let him advise you on what to put in your garden this month. He'll be telling you there's still time to plant southern peas, green and wax beans, and maybe even some limas. Kohlrabi, collards, cucumbers, sweet potatoes and summer squash would like to join the beans. Pick up some transplants of peppers, eggplants and tomatoes. Buy the largest tomato transplant you can afford, as time is running out on their growing season. They stop setting fruit once night time temps exceed 70 degrees, but, until then, keep the salt shaker and pepper grinder at the ready.



Today's Harvest



Sweetpeas Bouquet



## A Shower of Color

# The Confederate Rose

*Editor's Note: This is a reprint from Jan's article in "The Islander" magazine.*



*By Jan Brick  
MG 2001*

**T**he Confederate Rose, along with such traditional garden favorites as the Camellia, the Magnolia and the Azalea, is one of those plants that enjoy the esteemed status as symbols of the "Old South." Imagine a gentile scene that includes a front porch, comfortable old wicker rockers, a glass of iced tea—lemonade—or a mint julep if you prefer. The garden surrounding this panorama will surely include all of these beloved varieties. Until recently I was not familiar with the charms of the Confederate Rose. A friend brought me some cuttings from her garden, told me to "just put them in the ground anywhere and they will do their thing." Much to my surprise and pleasure, she was absolutely right—do their thing they did indeed.

The Confederate Rose is a large shrub originally from China that has a particular partiality to the Southern United States. It is not a rose at all but is actually a member of the hibiscus family. In the summer months, it becomes a jaw dropping spectacle when it leafs out into a big bushy mass. The large leaves are a bright green, hairy on the undersides with a coarse texture that gives the plant a distinctive eye-catching appeal.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Confederate Rose is the color cycle of the blooms—"The flowers open pure white and change color over a three-day period until they are deep pink and

then as they die assume a dark blue-pink hue. The most notable characteristic of this flowering shrub is that flowers of three distinct colors appear on the bush simultaneously as the blooms color cycle independent of one another." The blooms are large and may remind those northerners among us of Peonies. At one point last summer, I counted more than a hundred buds and blooms on one of my plants—all doing their thing with gusto! Comments like "What is that?" and "Where can I get that?" were commonplace throughout the season and well into the fall months. This is definitely one of the most imposing and unusual of flowering plants.

The Confederate Rose qualifies as one of my user-friendly selections for the gardener with a not-so-green thumb. Little to no care is required by this shrub. It takes care of itself and is adaptable to most locations and soil conditions. It is a drought-tolerant plant that will thrive in full sun but still perform well in some shade—easy to propagate from cuttings—a pass-along plant extraordinaire.

The showiest Confederate Rose is a free standing specimen that has no competition from other shrubs. It is at its best when allowed to grow with minimal pruning. The perfect shape, the large size, and the abundance of multicolored flowers are unique. Plant this treasure in the front yard where it can be easily seen, giving it the exposure it deserves!



*Photo by MG Marge Jenke*



## MG Best Shots

Favorite Figs - Terry Cuclis



Favorite Rose - John Jons



Favorite Palm by OJ Miller



Party Pecan Tree by Herman Auer



Potatoes by Luke Stripling



Favorite "love to hate" weed by Anna Wygrys





# Groovy Experts and Their Favorites



by Sandra Devall  
MG 1998

**T**his is just a small peek into the passions and passionate people that make up the Galveston County Master Gardeners. In this edition of our magazine, I wanted to link the importance of photography to our educational programs because photos and 'groovy experts' are integral to each other for the success of our programs.

Here's how it works. A new Master Gardener with an interesting topic gets linked to a set of MG experts to help them. For example, MG Jenifer Leonpacher works closely with each presenter to create a PowerPoint using our custom-designed template. Photos are chosen from our massive digital photos library and then the presentation is presented to a small Master Gardener critique group. These presentations then are available to the public through special programs to groups, Saturday seminars and Tuesday evening seminars.

Another use of photographs is our locally produced information sheets. These sheets cover specific planting problems related to Galveston County. Camille Goodwin is one of our technical writers that can get the copy out in the blink of an eye to help us keep up with the new problems that emerge. So we salute the photographers, the digital library committee who catalog them, the support people who work on the production and the presenters who all work together. All for FREE—all for our community! Thanks to all of you!

**TERRY CUCLIS (MG 1987) ON 'FIGS'** - One of my favorite fruit tree families is figs and I have ten varieties which are: Alma, Angelique, Brown Turkey, Celeste, Kadota, LSU Purple, Lyndhurst White, Marseilles and Negrone (Red Cap). The Angelique, Brown Turkey and Marseilles I bought from Monticello. President Jefferson brought the originals from France. Angelique produces a very large, tennis ball size light brown very sweet fruit. Unfortunately, it has a very large open eye so in our climate it gets sour just before it ripens. Brown Turkey is a closed eye brown fruit with outstanding good taste. Good production and large size fruit started the third year. Marseilles is very productive all summer long with green sweet fruit. It has an open eye but its nectar blocks insects. It is best to harvest the fruit before lunch because as the day gets warmer the nectar dissolves and insects are able to get in, spoiling the fruit.

**JOHN JONS (MG 2003) ON 'ROSES'** - My favorite rose changes daily. On this cold March morning, my favorite rose is called "George Burns" that is currently flowering in my garden. The rose is a yellow, striped irregularly with red, cream and pink floribunda rose. The blooms can be around 3½ inches. It is full, borne in small clusters, with a moderate fruit and citrus fragrance. The foliage is large, dark green and glossy. It grows compact and upright with a medium size (3 to 3½ inches). It was hybridized by Tom Carruth in 1996 and introduced by Spring Hill Nurseries Co. in 1997. The parents were the roses Calico x Roller Coaster. It is rated as 7.7 (out of 10) by the American Rose Societies Handbook on selecting roses.

**OJ MILLER (MG 2010) ON 'PALMS'** - One of my favorite plants (palm) is *Bismarckia nobilis* or the Bismarck Palm. It is just now being grown here with any frequency. I have found that if a decent size specimen is transplanted, without disturbance to the root ball, the plant will adapt and grow well here. During our two most

recent and hardest freezes, the fronds suffered some damage, but the palms recovered nicely and just looks spectacular, with their ice blue colored fronds and stiff stately look. When the palm matures, it does take up quite a bit of room, but is a really beautiful specimen palm with somewhat the appearance of a Washington palm, but with the blue fronds. This palm comes from Madagascar and can stand dome drought for a time, but does best with regular watering and fertilizing. Do enjoy this beautiful palm!

**HERMAN AUER (MG 1983) ON 'THE PARTY PECAN'** - A Mahan pecan that my family called the "Party Pecan" taught me a lot about pecan trees. It was planted in the back part of our yard when the children were young and brought pleasure to the family.

As it grew, it was surrounded by a hammock, a picnic table, and a barbecue pit. After 10 years, small limbs began to fall off. So, like the American Indians, we began using that wood in the barbecue pit. The smoke from pecan wood became a fungicide and insecticide as it drifted upward through all the pecan trees. With the 'TLC' of nitrogen and supplemental water, this tree became a very heavy producer of pecans.

In 2012, as the pecans were being shelled, I measured and photographed them, and the length of most nuts was almost two inches long. Today, during the Fall, a real treat is to walk under the trees, reach over, pick up a hand full of nuts, crack, shell and eat them as you leisurely stroll through the dried fallen leaves. Then you know that Fall is here.

**LUKE STRIPLING (MG 1991) ON 'POTATOES'** - March 5, 2013. I just came in from watering my small potato patch, only two rows about twelve feet in length. This bed will produce enough potatoes for myself and Madeline till the next potato harvest. Most of the potatoes we buy at the store are from the previous season and just don't have the same flavor.

I think of all the vegetables I have grown, the potato is high on my list of good eating. You may fry, boil or bake the potato. Add any kind of dress up for your taste. I like a small potato baked, dressed with a bit of black pepper and a pat of butter. Boiled and mashed with sweet cream or butter with a sprinkling of roasted garlic is very tasty. How about potato rolls for Sunday dinner? I have to quit or I'll be off to the grocers to buy some chips—potato that is.

**ANNA WYGRYS (MG 1993) ON 'WEEDS'** - Because my category is "weeds," my plant choice is one "I love to hate." Nut grasses are the number one weed pest worldwide. Our particular species is Yellow Nut Sedge, *Cyperus esculentus*. One way to distinguish sedges from other plants is the grass-like foliage forms a triangular stem. Young shoots form "nuts" on the root that will replenish the foliage when removed. Large colonies grow quickly because of an extensive rhizomatous root system. Rhizomes form new plants and nuts. Mature plants bloom and scatter seeds. Another environmental advantage of nut sedge is a bacteria hosted in the roots which destroys soil nitrogen. Nut sedge would be the "perfect plant" if it was not such a pest!



## A Variety of Perennials That Bloom & Show at Different Times of the Year

# Talented Gardeners, Amazing Yards

by Cheryl Armstrong  
MG 2010

This month we visited the gardens of Elayne and Demo Kouzounis. You might recognize Elayne as the Master Gardener (Class of 1998) that debuted her slide presentation on Hummingbirds this past month. Elayne and Demo have dotted their landscape with perennials. The bulk of their landscape is designed to be in full bloom during the fall migration of the hummingbirds.

As Elayne led me through the landscape and explained if the plant was a hummingbird plant, a butterfly plant or one the bees loved, I noticed the absence of annual color. Elayne and Demo have carefully planted a variety of perennials that bloom and show at different times of the year, having no need to support the plantings with annual color. The result is an organized, mature garden with beautiful balance. Some of the more interesting nectar plants awaiting the hummers are: *Ligularia dentata* with its yellow daisy-like flowers, *Cassia 'Candle Stick'* for hummers and butterflies and *Callistemon 'Mauve Mist'* as well as the more well-known *Allamanda cathartica*, with its bright yellow trumpets sprawling the street fence, *Jatropha*, *Heleconia*, Fire Spike and all things tubular.

In addition to preparations for the fall migration, Elayne has a keen interest in herbs. Not only does she have an herb garden, she has herbs dotted here and there among the other beds. Flat-leaved parsley, *Petroselinum*, pokes out from

behind a rose. *Salvia coccinea 'Lady in Red'*, Lemon Balm, and Almond Verbena add interest to a garden designed to attract butterflies. Tuscan Blue Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, was gifted to her from Madeline Hill for writing an article on 50 ways to use Rosemary. It is now blooming and the bees were all abuzz over the tiny blue flowers. Elayne introduced me to a rare plant that I had never heard of. Ramie, *Boehmeria nivea*, is a textile plant, also a gift from Madeline Hill. Elayne uses her herbs to enhance the quality of their everyday lives. She cooks with them, shares them, and makes flavored waters with them. Of course, she makes her own Pesto, growing their own 1015 onions, peppers and herbs. Tomatoes are not grown on the island. Demo can't keep ahead of the birds. He prefers to grow tomatoes in another location, farther inland.

Demo said his secret to the beauty of the gardens is simple—"Survival of the Fittest." If it needs fussing over, it won't make it. Everything planted has to survive the salt, the winds and the regular watering schedule.

The vegetable garden is planted in a position to shield it from the winds, but leaves it exposed to the western sun. To remedy this, he has planted a grape vine right down the center, shielding those plants from the hot summer sun. Adjacent to the vegetable garden is a raised bromeliad garden. On the island the bromeliads are perennials and don't require any special protection from winter winds.

Photos by MG Cheryl Armstrong

Elayne loves the bromeliads because, unlike most plants, the bromeliad's beauty is enjoyed from looking straight down it.

The gardens are all framed with trees. These provide a wind break, shade and cover for the wildlife. The Meyer Lemon blooms' sweet fragrance filled the air. The gray-green foliage of the Olive Tree swayed romantically in the breeze. Loquat, Avocado, Travelers Palm and a Chaste Tree help provide upper canopy.

The queen of the trees is their Canary Island Palm, *Phoenix canariensis*. This palm's beautiful shape makes it one of her favorites in the garden. Of course, being on the island, the gardens are studded with all varieties of *Nerium oleander* including the hard to find variegated ones, all brimming with blooms getting ready to bust. Demo faithfully prunes these back in September to guarantee a vibrant spring bloom.

Elayne is in tune with her garden. As we walked and talked, I observed the careful way she touched each plant, feeling the foliage and enjoying what each plant has to offer. Even the foul smelling Copper Canyon Daisy has a place in her heart, for she enjoys the petite yellow flowers it displays. Flowers are cut and enjoyed in vases. Palm fronds are cut and used, and one plant is grown specifically to share its bounty with a friend, the Pique Uni Pepper, which I am told "es muy caliente" (very hot). Thank you Elayne and Demo for sharing your amazing garden with us.



Elayne in her Garden



*Ligularia dentata*



Rue



Orchid Tree



Variegated Oleander



Facing North



North West



Bromeliad Garden



Majestic Canary Island Palm



## Changes in the Master Gardener Association

# Our Past, the Present & Future

*Editor's Note: John Jons is the Board President, Galveston County Master Gardener Association*



*by John Jons  
MG 2003*

**T**his year our Galveston County Master Gardener Association (GCMGA) achieves the milestone of proving service to the Galveston County community for over 31 years. Based upon comments from long-time Galveston County Master Gardeners (GCMGs)—our GCMGA has changed significantly. I became a GCMG in 2003 and, in my short tenure, I certainly agree with these comments. Change, whether good, neutral or bad, is inevitable. Delightfully, history suggests, that for the GCMGA, change has been totally good. To further complement this change, our evolution has been a deliberate and a well-managed one that has been based on the great efforts and teamwork of the GCMGs and Dr. J.

Our gardening educational and demonstration garden activities most visibly highlight the changes. In the past we only held a few on-site public seminars and offsite (garden club) education activities. The same speakers often taught multiple topics, and the instructional process ranged from simple stand-up lectures with instructional media that may have included overhead or 35mm slides. Our classroom facility consisted of a small room that was often crammed with seminar attendees. Today, we have a large number of speakers who use the latest instructional media that often optimizes computer technology, supported with lots of illustrative photos, and the new classroom can easily seat 200+ people. In 2008 we conducted 55 educational events for 1,574 Galveston County residents. In 2012 we conducted 79 educational events for 3,205 Galveston County residents.

The demonstration gardens have grown from the landscape around a small building and raised garden beds built over a black-topped parking lot, with a small shed, to about three acres of land with over 60 planted and well maintained raised beds, over 90 trees, supporting buildings and equipment, and multiple project-based and ongoing gardening research activities. The GCMG demonstration gardens team has grown from a small handful of folks to sometimes over 50 GCMGs present on designated work days.

The changes in all of our other GCMGA activities (that are too numerous to list in this article) may not be as visible as the education activities and the demonstration gardens, but they significantly contribute to our GCMGA efforts and success. For example, the newsletter has grown into a full color web-based magazine, no longer just for the GCMGs but now read by millions of on-line readers—5.2 million hits last year. We have published over 5 highly illustrated gardening books specifically written for the Galveston County gardener. The garden-line phone coverage has increased, and I would also surmise that the knowledge of those providing this service has also increased. The behind-the-scenes GCMGA support that includes details like association management and documenta-

tion, annual sale preparation and GCMG training, has continued to improve, resulting in ongoing process improvements in both effectiveness and efficiency as evidenced by the fact we have been visited by other Texas Master Gardener Associations who want to learn how we do what we do.

The successes of the past and the present have been and continue to be validated by outstanding customer (Galveston County residents) feedback and the many annual Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service awards that the GCMGA has won (possibly the most of any Texas State Master Gardener Association) for its efforts at the Texas State level.

But what is possibly more important is the change in the increased number of GCMGs supporting the GCMGA activities. Initially, there was a small team of GCMGs that supported most of the GCMGAs activities. Now we have substantially more GCMGs supporting our GCMGA efforts. Plus, the teamwork has continued to grow and thrive enabling us to do more and be more successful in supporting Galveston County residents' gardening needs. For example, in the early 1990s we had about 8,000 volunteer hours and last year we had around 25,000 volunteer hours from our members.

So where are we going in the future? I would suggest that, based upon our past and considering our present, our future looks very bright. I anticipate that the gardening educational offerings will continue to expand as in each new class of GCMGs we discover a wealth of new gardening knowledge and teaching talent, and more of our existing GCMGs have mastered the instructional skills to share their gardening expertise. The demonstration gardens are still a work in progress. The trees, plants and plant research efforts are now starting to mature. We will soon have a greenhouse. We will conduct more demonstration garden tours and gardening demonstrations for Galveston County residents and school children. We will continue to fully support the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service. All these activities will continue to be focused on further increasing GCMG horticultural knowledge and expertise enabling us to help Galveston County residents be successful in their gardening efforts. I also anticipate that some of our members who have provided the outstanding leadership to enable us to achieve the successes we have all enjoyed to-date may step aside to provide other GCMGs the opportunity to lead us into the future.

In summary, after 31 years, the outstanding efforts of GCMGs in the past built a strong foundation, which has rewarded us with the successes we are enjoying today and is providing us with the opportunity for a potentially great future as a Master Gardener Association in offering services to Galveston County residents.





# Project: Demonstration Gardens

## Carbide Park



*By Tom Fountain  
MG 2008*

**T**he demonstration garden has been a very busy place the past few months. Beds that were full of greens a few months ago seem empty until you look a little closer, and then you see a few sprouts starting to break the surface. By the time you reach the orchard, it becomes obvious that spring is budding out all over.

The garden's winter vegetable production was good. Many bags were filled to deliver 300 pounds of eggplant, winter greens, and other vegetable bounty to community centers and food pantries.

This month our garden hosted its first Thursday "Garden with the Masters" tour. The tour gives the public a chance to come in and see what we are doing with the garden. The first open house visitors included county commissioner Kevin O' Brien, and Dr. Bill Welch and Cynthia Mueller from Texas A&M. I understand all of our visitors had lots of questions and were very pleased with their experience. Thanks to our gardeners and tour crew.

Over the past month, we had demonstrations open to the public on fig pruning from Herman Auer, Bob Marshall provided a demonstration on pruning grapes, and Sam Scarcella provided a tomato planting demonstration. The 2013 Class of MGs met in the garden, where they were given a short course in rose pruning by John Jons, and then he put them to work. The rose pruning went well and looks good.



Framing for the greenhouse foundation has started in earnest and is nearing completion. The "low water use" garden is taking place. Five palms have been planted there and it is starting to look nice. Reframing on the old garden beds continues and it could all be completed before fall. Otherwise, the gardeners have been busy cleaning out the old fall and winter beds to make way for new spring crops. Come by and see the amazing transformations taking place at the garden.



## A Senior Day Program

# LIBBIE'S PLACE - Galveston



By Jan Fountain  
MG 2012 Intern



MGs Judy Anderson, Susan Clasen, Jan Fountain & Bobbie Ivey

Take a trip down to Galveston Island and you will find Libbie's Place tucked away in the shadow of Moody Methodist Church. There are two groups of Master Gardeners who volunteer there. One group assists with "The Green Thumb Club," helping them with gardening activities. The other group is the grounds crew that works around the facility to incorporate the landscaping plan.

You may ask, "How did so many Galveston County MGs get involved in a non-profit, senior day program?" When Libbie's Place was first envisioned in 1993, a need was found for a community facility to meet the needs of the disabled and elderly. With planning and a permanent endowment fund, the efforts of many provided the opening of the facility in 2001. A Dow Grant was given in 2007 to provide a landscaping program, which included raised beds and gardening tools. Alice Williams, the director, contacted Bobbie Ivey, MG 2008, asking her for help with developing the landscape. Bobbie became interested in the possibility of doing gardening outreach activities there. In 2009 she made a proposal to Dr. Johnson to add Libbie's Place as a Master Gardener project garden and it was approved.

Through Bobbie's efforts the program is starting to take shape. Bobbie says, "The senior attendees reach a time in their life when they need activities that stimulate them socially, cognitively, and physically." She also says that they need to be creative, play in the dirt, and to take care of something. With the direction of Bobbie Ivey and Dr. Pam Gilbert (MG '03), the grounds crew manager, the Libbie's Place gardens have become a project that is evolving into a lovely place with many opportunities for an exchange of ideas. Many of the participants would say, "It is a little bit of heaven on earth."



MGs lead Indoor Green Thumb Club gardening activities during inclement weather



There are many outdoor gardening activities with the Green Thumb Club that are supported by GCMGs.

Now MGs have an opportunity to fulfill their volunteer hour requirements in Galveston. If you are interested in learning more about volunteering at Libbie's Place, please contact Bobbie or Pam.

## April-May "Things To Do"

# Gardening Calendar Video



by Cheryl Armstrong  
MG 2010

by Deane Greer  
MG 2009

by Jenifer Leonpacher  
MG 2010

by Gregory Werth  
MG 2012



Click on the "Play Video" icon at top right to see what a "group effort" can do (by the aforementioned Master Gardeners) to prepare an exceptional "Things to Do" Calendar.

## Photos, Photos Everywhere!

# Digital Library Committee

Last September about a dozen Master Gardeners met with an interest in sorting the 35,000 photographs in our digital photo library. It looked like a closet that was full of wonderful things, but finding a specific photo or group of photos was a massive challenge.

The first thing the group did was to agree that they would try to sort all of them into general folders by the end of January. What? That sounds impossible. Everyone took a three-hour shift each week working like a production line.

Roger Allison thought it was a joy to add the author's name to each and every photo. Then they went from that folder into one of fifty general categories such as lawns, herbs, etc. The next step is to go into those folders and add the name of the particular plant to it, make a subfolder, then move the photos into their new homes. We also are adding the botanical name to as many photos as we can. Members of the committee are Rodger Allison, Judy Anderson, Chris Anastas, Penny Bessire, Deb Boswell, Helle Brown, Margaret Canavan, Cindy Croft, Jan Fountain, Barbara Hankins, Tim Jahnke and Margaret Landers.

Our next goal is to set up a drop box so that Master Gardeners can place their photo onto it from their computer and identify the specific photo set that we do not have. We will also stay busy naming, sorting, and identifying incoming photos.

You may not realize how many times a week a Master Gardener requests a specific photo and also how much time this system has saved. Photos are such an intricate part of our responsibility serving our community with educational tools.

Photography is part of our experiments in the demonstration garden, the identification of plants and diseases, PowerPoints for classes, informational sheets, books, and this newsletter. The newest use of photography has been in video work. It seems that we have only touched the surface.

If you see something blooming, diseased or interesting, pull out that camera or cell phone and take a few photos of it. We need a set; one close up of a bloom, leaf, or disease and then a representative photo of the whole subject.

You can send them to the office or bring them on a flash drive. As a matter of fact, you could say that every Master Gardener is on our Digital Library Committee.





# Publications that Get to the Point Galveston County MG Publications

There is a lot of information available today to assist gardeners, but Galveston County Gardeners occasionally need specific information to this county. This is a unique county. There are also times when we are overrun with weeds, unexpected insects and weather surprises. A recent example is the weeds that have adopted our area after a hurricane five years ago. The hurricane left, but the weeds stayed.

Our Master Gardener group began to 'publish' special information when this group first started in 1982. They were only black and white publications and many are still around. Some have morphed and merged into larger publications and mostly they have come about by someone saying, "We need to have all that information in one place."

This article is a salute to the large groups of people that it takes to put together our books, specification sheets, FAQs, planting charts and our newest set of publications that begin with names like . . . *Galveston County's 12 Most Aggressive Weeds.*

Being a Master Gardener is like being a doctor, everyone thinks you know all the answers. The truth is, we know which MG is the expert or where to find the answer. Many of the publications give us a place to begin looking for the help that someone needs.

**The FAQ Sheets.** FAQ means 'Frequently Asked Questions' and these are the subjects that are most common to this area. They are all one sheet of paper printed back and front. There are sixty of them, covering sixty of the most commonly asked questions. They cover diseases, disorders, pests and miscellaneous with thorough descriptions, primary occurrence, symptoms, conditions and management practices. The best part is that each sheet has eight photos on it, by the time you show your customer the sheet, the first thing you here is, "That's it!"

**Books.** In 1998, towns in Galveston County were growing and there were lots of new gardens with owners who were new to this area. Dr. Johnson asked several Master Gardeners if they would put together a detailed book for the county's new citizens. What came of out this was a 50 page book called, *A Thumbnail Guide for New Gardeners in Galveston County*. Today, there are eight books and they all 'fly off the shelf'. The last book, *Creating the Tropical Look, Low-care Tropicals for the Upper Gulf Coast of Texas*, is 100 pages long with 226 photos and required 42 MG volunteers. All eight books are available to view on-line on the Galveston County Master Gardener Website.

**Publications for Training Seminars.** Galveston County Master Gardeners make sure that all of those who attend their seminars go home with handouts to help them keep up with the information that they have learned. These pamphlets and booklets are also available in the office. An example would be the in-depth set of instructions that Herman Auer uses for his grafting classes. They include information on the best types of grafting techniques for fruit and nut trees that grow in this area. Some of the information just can't be found on the internet, and what a wonderful place to get the information, from Master Gardeners who have tried it, analyzed it and love to write about it!



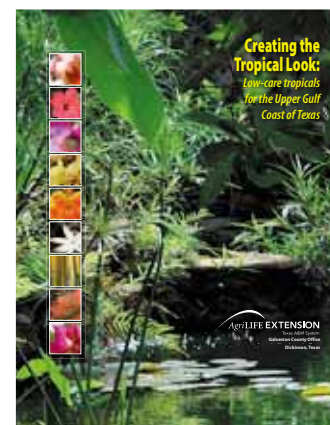
by Sandra Devall  
MG 1998



Galveston County's 12 Most Aggressive Weeds



12 Underappreciated Beneficial Insects



Creating the Tropical Look, Low-care Tropicals for the Upper Gulf Coast of Texas



Frequently Asked Questions



Grafting Deciduous Fruit & Nut Trees

Follow the Link Below to see the full document - 12 Underappreciated Beneficial Insects in Texas Gulf Coast Gardens

[http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/12\\_Underappreciated\\_Beneficial\\_Insects\\_in\\_Texas\\_Gulf\\_Coast\\_Gardens.pdf](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/12_Underappreciated_Beneficial_Insects_in_Texas_Gulf_Coast_Gardens.pdf)

# Testimonials

## Master Gardener - Perspective



by Gregory Werth  
MG 2012

I was born deaf. When I was about two years old, I began working with a speech therapist and learned lip reading. My parents pushed me to be a part of the mainstream community. They felt strong and insisted that I be mainstreamed in schools.

I finished my preparation in four years, and from that time on, I was placed in a regular classroom. In my training, 50% of the students were deaf and 50% had normal hearing. We learned to work together to understand and solve our communication problems. When I attended middle & high school in Wisconsin, I was the only deaf individual in the whole school.

I attended the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee and majored in computer science with a minor in cartography. After college, I moved to Texas where I have found my niche. I started the first company in Texas for CD-ROM technology. I then became a network consultant and now IT director, managing over several hundred computers with several companies.

I also taught sign language for nine years at Alvin Community College. My hobbies are stamp collecting, home remodeling, and gardening, landscaping with or without decks and “jack of all trades” repairs. On a trip to Hawaii, I fell in love with all the plants in Hawaii & especially plumerias. Now I have over a hundred different varieties.

I learned about the Master Gardener program from my sister fourteen years ago when she became a MG in Florida. I have always had an interest in landscaping and working in the yard. I thought of becoming an MG again after attending a MG plant sale while visiting in Maryland. I found out about the Galveston County MG Program online and visited with Dr. Johnson at the Extension Office. He worked diligently to help make it possible for me to attend the MG Class.

I was a little apprehensive when I signed up to be interviewed for the 2012 Master Gardener class. Even though, I was pretty confident that I could understand and communicate but was still a little

nervous at the interview. When I was accepted into the class, I was absolutely thrilled that they wanted me even though I'm deaf.

Although providing an interpreter was cost prohibitive, Dr. J did a good job of making sure I was accommodated with my needs. I can hear short words, but 90% of the time, I read lips. I was placed in the room so that I could see the lecturer, the screen and other Master Gardeners. He also requested each lecturer to face me, produced proper lighting when using videos, and also provided an audio enhancer with a portable PA system.

I was very impressed that the professors were always looking in my direction to make sure I understood. Lastly, Dr. J found a class partner for me, MG Judy Anderson, who made sure I got the class information I needed. MG Penny Bessire was also very helpful. With their notes combined, I was able to answer all the questions on the test. I did not feel left out.

I have learned so much from the MG program and am giving back by spreading MG knowledge, especially to my deaf/hearing impaired friends. I have many friends who are either deaf or hearing impaired. They have their own community. I am a bridge between them since they have difficulty communicating with other people. I have enjoyed working with the MG newsletter team, the MG website, and developing QR codes for the website and eventually for many plants in the Demo Garden.

We are who we are in the community, no matter our race, gender, disability or age. Everybody brings their own “room key.” When opportunity presents itself, we are all willing to share with other folks and our MG program makes that possible.

I agree with Heber Taylor, Editor of *The Galveston Daily News*, who stated in an opinion column a few months ago, “People who take the [Master Gardener] training do become better gardeners, of course, but there's a sense that taking a class with Dr. Johnson is also about becoming a better human being.”

I am a better gardener from all that I learned in the course and I also became a better human being.

*Editor's Note: To think of the diversity of talents in our MG program is amazing—the talents, age differences, numerous career paths. This is part of the path Gregory has taken. Everyone has to get something from this organization and everyone has to give back in order for our program to work as well as it does.*



# Testimonials

## Master Gardeners - Finding Their Niche



by MG Loretta Osteen  
MG 2010

After completing the Master Gardener Intern training in April 2010, our class was provided an orientation of the Extension Office including the MG office work areas. One of the volunteer opportunities identified was working on the Master Gardener Hot Line.

It is understandable that MGs are sometimes intimidated by working the MG Hot Line, but I was comfortable with it.

On our first day, there were twenty unanswered calls waiting to be answered! I wondered, "How can we get through all of these?" But we did. It took some research, some sharing of knowledge between fellow Master Gardeners, including Laura Bellmore, the MG

Program Assistant and Laurel Stine, the MG Specialist in Entomology, to address that first set of questions and the many, many more questions since then. Dr. J, our County Horticulture Agent, is an awesome resource and I, as well as my fellow MGs, know that they can always approach him for help.

We were told during our training classes that we would find our niche by working in the variety of volunteer activities. I knew the MG Hotline was where I would devote my volunteer time--I knew I had found my 'niche'.

Even though it is volunteer service, I get more out of this than I give. With few exceptions, all of the county residents that I talk to are very sincere and genuinely appreciative of the efforts to help them solve their particular horticultural dilemma. I learn something new every week.

Many questions require research on my behalf, and I enjoy a challenge. All of us who volunteer with the MG Hot Line are rewarded by expanding our knowledge and having the gratification of helping others.

As Master Gardeners, we have many volunteer opportunities to choose. It's amazing to look back at my class and see how each one found their 'niche.'

*Editor's Note: Dr. J reports that he knows when it is Thursday because Loretta is always, always there at the Extension Office volunteering. She has done this every Thursday morning since she completed the 2010 MG Intern class. Three cheers to Loretta and other members of the MG Hotline Team.*

A few years ago I heard the words "Master Gardener." The local paper had an article that a class would be coming soon. Since I love to play in the dirt, my imagination kicked into gear. I enrolled for the class. All this happened in another county. Our classes were on Tuesdays and Thursdays with Professors from A&M University. I knew I would learn so much about horticulture.

I grew up on a farm learning about growing our own food and the methods my Mother used to teach me about gardening. I have felt that in the knowledge of the Professors I could really be more knowledgeable of horticulture. All this was a great hobby and I also called it good therapy.

I would volunteer as I had time. As time passed, I would hear about the annual State Master Gardener Conferences. All I would hear was about Galveston County Master Gardeners. I was curious to know why Galveston County had such a fantastic group of Master Gardeners. I had some health issues that gave me an opportunity to make some changes in my location. I again heard about Galveston County.

I was in a situation where I could attend educational programs on horticulture conducted at the former Extension Office location on Highway 3 in Dickinson. Now I knew what I heard about Galveston County Master Gardeners was true. I have enjoyed the pleasure of meeting gardeners, the plant sales along with all the Galveston County leadership.

This is why I volunteered for the current class so that I could witness and be present for the sessions of learning why the county plays such a role in master gardening. The Professors are teaching topics new to me as well as very educational. I am enjoying every class plus



By Skipper Cullison  
MG 1998

I sure am learning a lot more of horticulture. I salute the Galveston County leadership and MG Program and I am honored to be able to wear my Galveston County Master Gardener badge!

*Editor's Note: MG Skipper Cullison is 90 years young. If you have attended any of the Intern Class programs, she is always there with her smiling face!*

# Upcoming Events

April, May and early June 2013 Galveston County Master Gardener Educational Programs for Interested Gardeners. The following Master Gardener Programs are free to the public.

Location: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park

4102 Main Street (FM 519), La Marque Texas 77568

For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email [GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net)

## Tuesday Night & Saturday *Gulf Coast Gardening* Educational Seminars

### April 2013

#### Preserving the Harvest - Water Bath Canning

Saturday, April 6

9 a.m. - 12 Noon

This program is presented by Marilyn Simmons, Galveston County Extension Agent for Family & Consumer Sciences. This program on how to carry out water bath canning will be a classroom and hands-on workshop in the kitchen. (Class is limited to 15 participants with a \$15 fee for materials. For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email [GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net))

#### The Culture and Care of Palms

Saturday, April 13

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Palm tree enthusiast and Galveston County Master Gardener O. J. Miller has over 15 years experience with palms in our area. This program will include an introduction to palms, an overview of the exotics and commonly found palms at nurseries in our area, palm planting methods, palm fertilization, freeze preparation and proper care. The program will include a discussion on the better varieties of palms for Galveston County and the surrounding area.

#### The Glorious and Perpetual Daylily

Tuesday, April 16

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Nell Shimek will present a program on growing and propagating daylilies in our area. Nell is a daylily enthusiast who has grown and hybridized daylilies for more than 30 years and is currently growing more than 800 varieties in Alvin.

#### The ABC's of Home Composting

Saturday, April 20

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Galveston County Master Gardener Ken Steblein will present a program that will provide practical information for converting yard, garden and kitchen waste into compost. Compost is that magical soil amendment that is a soil conditioner, fertilizer and the key ingredient in organic gardening.

#### Rainwater Harvesting

Tuesday, April 30

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

This program is presented by Master Gardener Tim Jahnke. Tim will discuss and show ways humans have collected the precious resource of rainwater for more than 500 years with information on current applications for today's gardener.

#### The Texas Watershed Steward Program

Tuesday, April 30

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Galveston County Extension Office.

This workshop has been approved by Dr. William Johnson for MG certification hours. The workshop will provide an overview of water quality and watershed management in Texas. It will primarily focus on water quality issues in Dickinson Bayou as well as efforts by the Dickinson Bayou Watershed Partnership, Texas Coastal Watershed Program, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, and area residents to help improve water resources and the health of the surrounding watersheds. For information visit: <http://dickinson-bayou.org> For more information and to pre-register, go to <http://twst.tamu.edu> or contact Phoenix Rogers at 281-309-5064, [plrogers@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:plrogers@ag.tamu.edu)

### May 2013

#### Herbs for the Gulf Coast

Saturday - May 4

MG Cindy Croft 9:00 -11:00 a.m.

#### Home Fruit Orchard Tour

Saturday - May 12

9:00 a.m. - 12 Noon – Various Locations to be announced

#### Preserving the Harvest-Pressure Canning

Saturday - May 18

9:00 a.m. - 12 Noon

with Marilyn Simmons, CEA – Family and Consumer Sciences

### June 2013

#### Tomato and Pepper Tasting Event

Saturday - June 1

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

MG Terry Cuculis and MG Gene Speller

#### The Fabulous Frangipani (aka Plumeria)

Tuesday - June 4

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

MG Loretta Osteen



## Meeting Minutes

**FEBRUARY 12, 2013 MG MEETING & MARCH 12, 2013 MG MEETING**

The meeting came to order at 6:30 pm with MG President Jim Edwards presiding.

Wes Ruzek gave a report on the Fruit Tree Sale stating that it was very profitable. Master Gardener purchases were a new record.

Velda Cuculis reported on the TMGA Director's Meeting in College Station, discussing the new awards committee, 501c3 standing requirements, and tree training specialist training this year.

Barbara White spoke on the Jr MG program. She is working with GISD and is getting the program organized and revitalized.

Linda Steber gave an update on the newsletter in that it is no longer being mailed out, but the latest edition is on our MG website. Gregory Werth

has made it possible for you to subscribe to the newsletter so that you will receive it automatically.

Dr. Johnson noted that there had been 231,000 downloads of our December-January newsletter edition thusfar. He also announced the Master Gardener Class of 2013 consisted of 24 new interns.



Speaker MG Elayne Kouzounis presented the program, *Hummingbirds—Jewels of the Garden* on February 12, featuring beautiful photography and interesting information.

In the absence of MG President Jim Edwards, Dr. Johnson directed the short March MG meeting.

It was reported that a bus will most likely be secured for the State MG meeting in McAllen leaving October 16 and returning on October 19.

The bus will hold 55 passengers, so around 45 to 50 folks will need to sign up. Dr. Johnson commented they would fill first with Master Gardeners and spouses, then Precinct 2 MGs.

Jim has secured a block of rooms. It is necessary to tell Laura when you book your room, so they will be able to keep a record of how many would be attending.



By Mary Lou Kelso  
MG 2000



By Cindy Croft  
MG 2009



Speaker MG Cindy Croft gave a presentation on Herbs on March 12 which she is planning to give to the public, so the MG's present could give suggestions.

## Upcoming Conferences



### Texas Master Gardener Conference 2013!

"Blooms, Birds & Butterflies" The conference will be held October 17 - 19, 2013 in McAllen, TX. It is hosted by the Cameron and Hidalgo Counties Master Gardener Association and will be held at the McAllen Conference Center. The Texas Master Gardener Association website has preliminary information including the host hotel Casa de Palmas and other hotel information, tour information, and speakers which includes our own GCMG Clyde Holt who will be speaking on Bonsai. This looks to be a terrific conference and details will be

updated including costs as they become available. I advise you to check the TMGA website frequently for details.

### The International Master Gardener Conference

It may not seem like it, but summer is quickly coming and temperatures will be rising. September 2013 you could be cooler and having fun with fellow MG's at the 2013 International Master Gardener



Conference, aptly being called "Alaska; Flowers, Fjords, and Friends", on the Holland America Cruise Ship Westerdam. The conference will run from 9/7/2013 - 9/14/2013. The cruise ship will depart Seattle on the 7th and the ports of call will be Juneau; Glacier Bay; Sitka; Ketchikan; Victoria, British Columbia; and return to Seattle. The sponsor of the conference is the University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Research and Extension. They have planned a full slate of keynote speakers and seminars (all to be given when the ship is at sea) on subjects ranging from ornamentals to vegetables, wildlife to conservation of water resources, native plants to herbs. It looks to be a fabulous conference and if you have never cruised before get ready for a beautiful and luxurious experience. Room costs range from \$899.00 - \$2749.00 and are per person and based on double occupancy. That does not include certain fees and taxes. There will also be a conference registration fee. Please see the website for the entire specific details <http://www.uaex.edu/imgc2013/>.

# 2013 MG Re-certification (Continuing Education) Hours Available Through the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office

Date	Event	Name of Program	Speaker	MGs
1/5/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Growing Avocados	Jerry Hurlbert	2.5
1/5/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Homegrown Peppers	Gene Speller	2
1/10/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Stone Fruit Grafting Hands-On Demo/Workshop	Herman Auer	1.5
1/12/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Grow Great Tomatoes	Sam Scarcella	3
1/12/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Gardening by the Square Foot	John Jons	2
1/15/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Successfully Growing Peaches	Herman Auer	2
1/17/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Stone Fruit Grafting Hands-On Demo/Workshop	Herman Auer	1.5
1/17/2013	MG Monthly Meeting	Fruit & Citrus Trees for the Gulf Coast	Heidi Sheesley	2
1/22/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Growing Citrus in the Home Landscape	Herman Auer	2
1/24/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Grafting Hands-On Demonstration/Workshop	Herman Auer	1.5
1/26/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Spring Vegetable Gardening	Luke Stripling	2.5
1/26/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Anyone Can Grow Roses	John Jons	1.5
1/29/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Blueberries in the Backyard	David Cohen	1.5
2/7/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Tomato Planting Demo/Hands-On Workshop	Sam Scarcella	1
2/9/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Tomato Stress Management	Sam Scarcella	2.5
2/9/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Kitchen Gardening	Mary Demeny	2.5
2/12/2013	MG Monthly Meeting	Hummingbirds for MGs only	Elayne Kouzounis	1.5
2/14/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Fig Pruning for the Home Orchard	Terry Cuclis	1.5
2/14/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Grape Pruning Hands-On Demo/Workshop	Robert Marshall	2
2/16/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Hummingbirds - The Jewels of the Garden	Elayne Kouzounis	2
2/16/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Honey Bees Around the Garden	Stewart McAdoo	1.5
3/5/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	50 Ways to Live a Greener Life	Ken Steblein	1.5
3/12/2013	MG Monthly Meeting	Herbs for the Gulf Coast for MGs only	Cindy Croft	1
3/16/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Grafting Your Own Fruit Trees	Herman Auer	2.5
3/19/2013	Gulf Coast Gardening Seminar	Vermiculture - Worm Castings for Your Garden	Linda Brown	1.5

## Summary

Last Updated: 20 March 2013

16 speakers & 25 Educational Programs

Total CEUs (Hours) 46.50

## Wrapped in Cheddar Rosemary Pastry

# Seasonal Bites

Seasonal Bites Recipe provided by Camille Goodwin. What could be better than moist, flavorful dates combined with delicious pecans, all wrapped up in a melt in your flavor burst of cheesy rosemary tender pastry? Serve these at your next gathering. Many thanks to Camille for sharing this recipe with us.



By Karen Cureton  
MG 2008

## Pecan Stuffed Dates

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1 ½ cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese                   | 1/3 cup butter, melted      |
| 1 cup all-purpose flour                                  | 24 pitted dates             |
| 2 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped                     | 24 pecan halves, toasted    |
| 1 teaspoon salt  | 1 egg white, lightly beaten |
| ¼ - ½ teaspoon cayenne (depending on your "spicy" taste) | ¼ teaspoon sugar            |

Toast pecan halves in oven and set aside to cool.

Combine first 5 ingredients in a bowl, stirring well. Add melted butter, stirring just until dry ingredients are moistened (Dough will be crumbly).

Make a lengthwise slit in each date, remove pit and stuff each with a pecan half. Press one generous tablespoon of the pastry mixture around each date, covering completely. Cover and chill 45 minutes.

Place dates on a greased baking sheet, and brush with egg white. Sprinkle with sugar. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes, or until lightly browned. Remove dates to a wire rack to cool. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Yield: 2 dozen





# Bulletin Board

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To volunteer for the **MG Phone Desk** contact Laura Bellmore by e-mail at [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net) or by calling the office at 281-534- 3413, ext 1.

**Libbie's Place Adult Day Care** has been designated as a Demonstration Garden for the Master Gardener Association. It is located at 5402 Avenue U in Galveston and is part of Moody Methodist Church outreach ministries (<http://www.moody.org/libbies-place-senior-day-program>). A crew is needed to maintain and upgrade the garden as needed with your time spent counting towards MG volunteer hours. MG Pam Gilbert is heading up the crew and will determine the day, time and frequency of the work days. If you are interested, or have any questions, please contact Pam at 409-771-5620 or by email at [DrPGilbert@aol.com](mailto:DrPGilbert@aol.com) to let her know the day/times (AM/PM) that would work best for you. Thank you for your time and consideration in this great new endeavor for the Master Gardeners.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**Tour Guides for "First-Thursday-in-a-Month" Public Access & Tour of our Demonstration Garden**

Long-winded title but it says what we will be doing. Our Demonstration Garden will be open for touring by the general public on the first Thursday of each month from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. MGs are needed to serve as tour guides for our demonstration garden. Contact MG Julie Cartmill at 281-932-8896 or email [evergreentreesinc@gmail.com](mailto:evergreentreesinc@gmail.com) or MG Bobbie Ivey at 713-748-8564 or email at [blivey@sbcglobal.net](mailto:blivey@sbcglobal.net) to volunteer.

**Master Gardener Digital Photo Library Committee**

Do not be alarmed/dissuaded with the name of "committee!" If you like to organize things—join our newest volunteer endeavor known as the Master Gardener Digital Photo Library Committee. The current weekly time schedule for this activity is every Thursday from 10 a.m.-12 noon. MG Sandra Devall will be providing leadership for this. Volunteers will be adding photographers' names to digital photos for cataloging/sorting, sorting photos, or looking up botanical names. If any of those tasks fit your interest—just show up and get with Sandra (281-534-3413, Ext. 17 or [sandra.devall@co.galveston.tx.us](mailto:sandra.devall@co.galveston.tx.us))! The Photo Library has been the primary source for photos used in PowerPoint programs, website, publications, newsletters, etc.

**Volunteers are needed to help with the Saturday programs and the Tuesday evening programs.** If you can help please contact Christine Anastas (281) 468-3787 or Robert Marshall e-mail [rbrtm01@att.net](mailto:rbrtm01@att.net)

**AgriLife Extension Office Demonstration Garden needs volunteers!** The gardens around the AgriLife Extension Office are maintained by Master Gardeners under the team leadership of MG Peggy Budny. This is an opportunity to make a good impression on the many visitors to the AgriLife Extension Office. Come out and have a good time while learning more about ornamentals. Please contact Peggy at 281-334-7997 or by email at [fmbmab@verizon.net](mailto:fmbmab@verizon.net) to find out the schedule and join her team.

**The Fabulous Front Gate Garden**—Have you ever noticed the landscape beds as you enter into the park from FM 519? That space is maintained by MG Solveig Cornille. She is in need of two committed volunteers to train and to assist her in the upkeep of this focal-point garden. Please contact Solveig at 281-534-7469 or [sc726@comcast.net](mailto:sc726@comcast.net) to volunteer.

## SPECIALIST & OTHER MG RELATED TRAINING

Please see the Texas Master Gardeners Website for details. Please note that if you go to the website you can find up- to-date information on Specialist Programs that were added in between editions of the newsletter. <http://www.texasmastergardeners.com>. You may download the application forms from that website. Note that all applications for the Specialist Training courses must be approved by Dr. William Johnson. Note that fees do not include lodging or food unless specified otherwise.

**National EarthKind Specialist Training – Taylor County**

Date : April 17, 2013 - April 19, 2013

Address: 1982 Lytle Way, Abilene, TX 79602

Phone 325-672-6048

The National Earth-Kind® Specialist training course is designed to provide advance training and resources to Master Gardeners to certify them to be part of a state and national corps of Earth-Kind® experts and educators.

**Plant Propagation – Tarrant County**

Date: April 26 – 27, 2013

Location: Resource Connection, 2300 Circle Drive, Fort Worth, TX 76119

The Master Gardener Specialist – Plant Propagation Program is designed to train and certify Master Gardeners to become part of a state corps of Plant Propagation experts and educators.

**MG Vegetable Specialist; Course Director-Joe Masabni**

**MG Earth-Kind Landscape Specialist; Course Director-Mengmeng Gu**

**MG Pecan Specialist; Course Director-Monte Nesbitt**

May 28-May 31, 2013 on Texas A&M Campus

Three specialist trainings will be offered twice over 4 days.

The MG Specialist Conclave is an opportunity for certified master gardeners to gain specialist training in one or more subject areas in a conference setting. Three specialist courses will be taught concurrently at the Texas A&M Horticultural Sciences Department building on the Texas A&M University Campus at College Station, Texas. For more information, check out the website mentioned above.

## NEED A GIFT?

The following Master Gardener award-winning publications are on sale. Stop by the Extension Office to pick them up for yourself or for gift-giving.

*The Butterflies of Galveston County*

*Thumbnail Guide to Gardening for New Gardeners*

*Ambrosia from Your Back Yard*

*Bilingual Guide to Yard Care*

*Herbs for the Upper Gulf Coast of Texas*

*Our Edible Landscape*

*Creating the Tropical Look*

# The Reason for Our Success

## Our Leader

**A**s you can see, this issue of the newsletter pretty much covers the landscape regarding Master Gardeners: what we do, who we are, and the results of our passion for gardening and sharing what we know. Galveston County Master Gardeners are astoundingly productive, effective, creative and generous, providing prodigious volumes of time, energy and information to the residents of our county and region.

So why have we done it? How do we keep this level of activity? What makes us give our time and talent to these efforts? It is no accident. We are educated. We are inspired. We are organized. We are encouraged, cajoled, and sometimes we are even bossed around. And we love it and come back for more. How can this be?

Two words: William Johnson. Educator, coach, friend, colleague, administrator, confidante, "fearless leader", lover of chocolate. He came to us after a childhood on a family farm in Virginia, via the University of Maryland (BSc in Biological Science), Oklahoma State University (PhD in Plant Pathology and Botany), and faculty positions at Oklahoma State University and Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Dr. Johnson took on a young Master Gardener program when he became County Extension Agent for Horticulture in Galveston County in 1989. Since then he has traveled with us through phenomenal growth and activity. Of course one person does not "make" a successful program such as ours, but one person certainly can "make" a difference. I believe, and I think you will agree, that William Johnson has done that. He is the backbone of our successful MG

program and a significant reason we continue to be involved.

Of course he doesn't do all the work. But his awareness of what needs doing, and his skill in finding and developing the talents in those who can do it, underlie the work that is carried out. Need a demonstration garden developed and maintained at the Extension Office? Here you go. Oops, need to move to a new office and start over again with a larger garden at Carbide Park? Sure we'll do it. Create publications? Start a Junior Master Gardener Program? Expand our educational seminar offerings? Develop a digital image library? Create and maintain a fabulous online presence? You get the picture.

While William is shepherding us, he continues to create informative weekly newspaper columns which keep him as the "face" of Master Gardeners in the area. He is the "go to" person for plant and insect identification. He tirelessly champions our cause with our funding sources in the County and State.

Each new class adds only about 22 new Master Gardeners to our ranks, but our numbers remain strong because those who are trained stay involved. When volunteers are needed, we show up. When programs need to be taught or carried out, we step up. William finds a way to identify our skills and encourage us to use them. While many organizations struggle to find members to fill elected positions, we have an incredibly talented leadership group.

This is noticed by outsiders as well. Each year our Association carries home multiple awards from the State Master Gardener Association meeting. Not only do we do

the work, William makes sure that the work is acknowledged.

So in addition to that nice warm feeling we get when we excel, we receive recognition from our colleagues in Texas and even beyond our State borders.

His own achievements do not go unnoticed. In 2011, the National Association of County Agricultural Agents named Dr. Johnson a recipient of the Distinguished Service Award. He also was part of the team given a Superior Service Award for work assisting with landscape recovery after Hurricane Ike. Dr. Johnson treats everyone with respect, compassion and integrity and creates an environment in which we are all infected by his behavior and principles. The *Galveston County Daily News* recognized him as a "Community Champion" in 2012. Editor Heber Taylor wrote, "People who take the training do become better gardeners, of course, but there's a sense that taking a class with Dr. Johnson is also about becoming a better human being." That certainly captures what keeps many of us involved. Not to mention his awesome sense of humor.

William Johnson. And he's not finished yet. There are potential Master Gardeners out there to be trained. There are gardeners and wanna-be's in the community who need education. There are publications to be created. In spite of his intellectual generosity, he knows much we have not yet learned from him. And since "knowledge not shared is knowledge lost" I, for one, plan to stick around to learn more.



By Dr. Margaret Canavan  
MG 2003



Dr. J Working on a Presentation



Addressing the Crowd



Answering Questions for the Public



## Peach Thinning is Tough but Necessary Task

# The Last Word...

*(Editor's Note: This article is a reprint of Dr. Johnson's Weekly Gardening Column in The Galveston County Daily News)*



By Dr. William M. Johnson  
CEA-HORT & MG  
Program Coordinator

Most of us especially enjoy seeing blooms produced by fruit trees that signal the end of the winter season. To a commercial peach producer, the sight of colorful blooms signals an approaching task known as fruit thinning. Homeowners should also realize the importance of this not-so-easy task of relieving peach trees of their "overload."

Even though you unmercifully pruned the poor creature's branches soon after last year's harvest season was over, the tree may still have too many peaches on it this spring to produce a high-quality crop later in the summer. Most peach trees in our area produced an unusually heavy set of blooms this spring. This means that most trees are even more likely have too many peaches to produce a high-quality crop of fruits—and that in turn means that some fruits have to go!

How does one properly thin the fruit of a peach tree? With determination, will power, vim, and vigor. Be determined that you will remove a high percentage of that fruit. Have the will power to stay with the gruesome task until the job is finished.

And exert plenty of vim and vigor so that you will have the job finished before your spouse comes home and has you committed for ruining the first decent peach crop that you have ever had! (Note to my high school English teachers and other language aficionados: I know that the words "vim" and "vigor" are basically synonymous—nevertheless, it helps to have both when thinning peaches.)

You must be strong! You must make a decision at this point. The decision is whether to have a lot of small, low-quality peaches or a very decent yield of high-quality fruits. Too many fruits on a tree will result in damaged trees and peaches that are mostly pit and little flesh.

In an earlier column I mentioned that a properly planted, properly pruned and well-cared for peach tree is capable of producing up to 400 pounds of peaches. It takes about 382 small peaches measuring 3/4" diameter to make a bushel, while it only takes 158 peaches measuring 2 1/2" diameter to make the same bushel.

One bushel of peaches typically weighs 48 to 50 pounds. In other words, you can get ample amounts of inferior size peaches without thinning or you can aim for the larger sized peaches. It's a lot less effort and the end result in total poundage will likely be the same—it's a no brainer.

Thinning is the hardest of all tasks for the novice fruit grower. Last week, the Master Gardeners thinned the peach trees in the demonstration orchard in Carbide Park. I was reminded of how difficult this task is when Barbara Hankins, who recently became a Master Gardener and who took the photo accompanying this column, exclaimed that she would not have had the courage to remove so many baby peaches.

Peaches should be thinned when the fruit is still as small as a dime. The longer the fruit has to mature under the ideally thinned situation, the larger it will get—less competition for nutrients and water equals larger fruit. How late in the season can you wait to thin? If you can easily cut through the pits of the peaches with a sharp knife, then it will be of some benefit to thin. However, remember that the

earlier thinning is accomplished, the greater the benefits in terms of fruit size and quality.

If you only have one or a few trees in the back yard, it's easy enough to remove them by hand—just give them a little twist, and off they come. Fruit should be thinned until all peaches are at least 5-to-6 inches apart on the branch and there are no twin (or side-by-side) fruit.

When thinning, look at the number of fruit remaining on the tree and not at the ground. Looking at the ground will likely prevent you from removing enough fruit.

Excessive fruit load can cause tree limbs to break. Excessive fruit set often will also result in small fruit with poor flavor. One more cautionary note: Excessive fruit set also can result in alternate bearing in which a tree will produce little or no fruit in the year following a large fruit crop.

Commercial growers go a step further and tie an 18-to-24 inch length of rope or rubber hose on the end of a wood stick, and knock the fruit off with this device. The rubber hose will not injure the limb upon impact. There is usually some natural drop of fruit later on in the year, whether you have thinned or not, but even with this, it is important to do the preliminary hand thinning.

When you complete this task, the ground will be covered with small peaches, and you probably will feel that you have lost your entire crop. But in reality, at harvest time you will likely realize that you did not thin enough.

I thinned a peach tree a few years ago and counted the number of fruits. I had removed more than one thousand peaches! (Peaches were thinned at the half-dime diameter stage; trees normally abort a portion of the initial fruit set as fruits enlarge.)

The pretty picture of the mammoth peach in sale advertisements will not occur in your backyard unless you have the determination and make the effort to thin. If you don't, then get ready for the pits—peach pits, that is!



Photo by MG Barbara Hankins

Thinning fruits is the hardest of all tasks for the novice peach grower but it must be done to produce a high-quality harvest. Shown above is Master Gardener Jackie Auer thinning peach trees last week at the Demonstration Orchard in Carbide Park.

# 2013 MGA MONTHLY MEETINGS

## January 17, 2013

Heidi Sheesley - TreeSearch Farms  
Pre-Fruit Tree Sale Presentation  
1:30 pm - Extension Office  
Carbide Park - La Marque

## February 12, 2013

Elayne Kouzounis - Hummingbirds  
6:30 pm - Extension Office  
Carbide Park - La Marque

## March 12, 2013

Cindy Croft - Herbs  
6:30 pm - Extension Office  
Carbide Park - La Marque

## April 9, 2013

Karen & Morris - Backyard Meeting  
5:30 pm - 2910 Bayshore  
Bacliff

## May 14, 2013

Barbara & Gary Hankins - Backyard Meeting  
5:30 pm - 12030 Sportsman Road  
Galveston Island

## June 11, 2013

Graduation at Mikey and Allen Isbell's  
7:00 pm - 1715 - 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
Galveston Island

## July 9 2013

Pat Forke & Cheryl Armstrong  
7:00 pm Extension Office  
Greenhouses  
Carbide Park - La Marque

## August 13, 2013

TBA

## September 10, 2013

TBA - Annual & Perennial Pre-Sale Meeting

## October 8, 2013

Rose Marie & Charlie Smith - Backyard Meeting  
5:30 pm - 11 Lakeview Drive  
Galveston Island

## November 12, 2013

Annual Meeting, Election of GCMGA Officers  
7:00 pm - Extension Office  
Carbide Park - La Marque

## December 10, 2013

Holiday Meeting - Mikey and Allen Isbell  
6:00 pm - 1715 - 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
Galveston Island



*By Judy Anderson  
MG 2012*

## GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

### *Master Gardeners Are Invited - Monthly Backyard Meetings*

Its spring and a busy time for all Master Gardeners, but mark your calendars. We have two backyard meetings scheduled you don't want to miss. Backyard meetings are a good time to visit with other Master Gardeners without tools and work gloves. We are very fortunate in Galveston County to have members who share their homes and hospitality for these friendly gatherings. These patio meals will be pot luck so bring a covered dish and chairs for you and your guest.

### **Tuesday April 9, 2013**

Karen and Tom Morris have hosted a backyard meeting for the past two years and you don't want to miss the April meeting this year. Located in Bacliff on the Houston Ship Channel, the Morris home offers a panoramic view of the boat traffic on the intercoastal waterway. With hurricane Ike a distant memory, Karen has changed her approach to gardening. Vegetables are now planted as part of the landscape. She describes her orchard as small, but it features 16 fruit trees including Anna apples, blueberries, and blackberries. Karen and Tom extend an enthusiastic welcome to the Master Gardeners for the April Backyard meeting. The Morris home is on Bayshore Dr. and they have requested all drivers avoid parking in the street. Look for signs indicating parking for the meeting. Neighbors and emergency vehicles need access. Directions to the home will be sent by email. Please join the Galveston County Master Gardeners for an evening of good food and fellowship.

### **Tuesday May 14, 2013**

If you are looking for a good place to catch a sunset, be sure to attend the May Backyard Meeting. Barbara and Gary Hankins invite the Master Gardeners to meet at their home at the end of Sportsman Rd in Galveston. The back of the house overlooks Galveston Bay while the front looks out on the wetlands, popular for birding, fishing and kayaking. Several years ago, Barbara and Gary adapted the foundation of a hurricane damaged building for a raised garden and orchard. The lower level provides wind protection for the veggies and keeps their roots protected from the salt water while the orchard is on the upper level. Barbara and Gary have been working with Herman Auer to make changes in the orchard and are hoping to see positive new growth. Barbara and Gary lived in the small house on their property for twelve years before deciding to build a new house. They were both very involved in the design and construction of their new home and have many stories to tell of the adventure. Parking off road on Sportsman Rd will not be a problem, but remember to allow access to other traffic. Directions to the May meeting will be sent by email. Look for a fun night of hospitality on Galveston Bay.



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**4102-B Main Street (FM 519) La Marque, Texas 77568 (281) 534-3413**  
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