

THE GALVESTON COUNTY Master Gardeners

Issue 189 - February/March 2014

A primer on peppers

Peppermania

- pages 14-15

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MG Magazine Published by the GALVESTON COUNTY AGRILIFE EXTENSION OFFICE

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Meet the new Prez

Ira Gervais

When Dr. Johnson talked to me about my interest in the President's position, I thought about it for a good while before deciding to run for office. Everything was so positive that turning it down didn't cross my mind.

From my point of view, it meant that I would get to guide and work with a dynamic volunteer organization, one whose members are proud of what they have accomplished but are also looking forward to what else they can do or improve in the future. With that in mind, as president I plan to visit the various groups in the Association to see exactly what they do, meet the individuals involved, and determine how we can help them to be even better.

I don't need to say that this is a busy organization. There are now about 235+ members happily educating the community about gardening in many ways. They give lectures, do research, take horticultural pictures, write articles, provide hands-on demonstrations and answer a wide variety of questions, some on the Hotline but many just from friends and neighbors. The true gift is that this is done with enthusiasm and a smile...at least most of the time!!!

But educating the community about gardening on the Gulf Coast is only part of the Master Gardeners' brief. The primary mission of the Association is simply to help or give back to the community. Yes, this includes donating produce willingly to various church organizations and food banks that help the needy, simply because it's the right thing to do.

More than that, Master Gardeners are willing to help wherever needed in the community. In the past, they've helped organizations plant trees after hurricanes, helped out with adult day care, helped to get school children interested in gardening...the list goes on.

My goal as the new president is to keep the Association moving forward along the same lines. Jim and Wes have done a great job over the past decade and we want to continue their good work. Hopefully, we can find even more ways to guide the Association, help the community grow and ourselves as well.

At the moment, all attention is focused on the annual Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale coming at the end of January. With any luck the weather will have co-operated and by the time you read this we will have had a roaring success, enabling us to fund our various projects for the upcoming year.

Then spring brings us the new class of Interns, planting varieties old and new and with whatever cruel tricks the weather decides to play. Summer comes along, bringing drought and heat, downpours, weeds and insects. This is where we use everything we know, ask other Master Gardeners and even do research on the problems we encounter. Remember... we garden because we love it...warts and all. Fall brings the Ornamental and Perennial Plant Sale, cooler temperatures and then the holidays once again.

Once again, a year has flown by because we love what we are doing. We are happy to have played a significant part in the life of the community and happy also to be a part of a Master Gardener organization that is the best in the state.

I would also like to take this opportunity to state that I want to hear what you have to say! I see this as an opportunity to further develop and enhance our Association with the leadership of Dr. Johnson. I look forward to serving the Association and working with each of you.



By Ira Gervais
MG 2011



As Jim Edwards passes the gavel to Ira, we would once again like to thank Jim for all that he has done for our MG Association these last 15 years.

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learn more about peppers

Front Cover Photo by MG Gene Speller



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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

Phone281-534-6695

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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By Robert Marshall
MG 2012

ask a master gardener

Hot Line Topics

"Them" invasion

Question: What is the proper way to get rid of the Raspberry ant?

In 1954 Hollywood made a monster movie titled *THEM* which was about an invasion of giant ants. Jump forward to 2014, the ant invasion is not giant ants but instead very tiny ants called the Raspberry Ant, Tawny Crazy Ant (its official common name) or Crazy Ant. These invaders move into your yard bringing mayhem and appear unstoppable. The forging begins in the spring and the numbers of ants increase throughout the warm and hot months of the summer and early fall. Spraying does not slow them down as they get into the walls of your home shorting out electrical appliances and crawling all over floors and walls. Moving is not a good option. The Raspberry ant has arrived.

This article will not talk about the history of the ant but will talk about how to fight back to reduce their numbers. As stated above you are not going to drive them off with just insecticides but have to turn to IPM (integrated pest management) for population reduction. The first thing is to be sure you have the Tawny Crazy Ant, not its relatives the Caribbean Crazy Ant or the Black Crazy Ant. If you are not sure, you can submit specimens to Texas A&M for verification. Other information for identification is available through the website listed below. Crazy ants nest under piles of leaves, pots, any yard debris; any place the queen can lay eggs out of direct sunlight and weather. Pick up any limbs, wood scraps, bricks, containers or any other items in your yard the ants can hide in or under. Rake the yard to remove leaves; even pecan shells can offer a hiding place. Once your yard is clean you will need to continue to keep it that way and begin your spraying program.

First, target a food source of any insects that secrete honeydew. This list includes aphids, whiteflies, scale insects, and mealybugs. On nonfood plants, consider using a systemic neonicotinoid.

Now it is time to spray your yard and in-

side the house to form barriers to help keep the ants from getting into the house. If you live in Galveston County, an exception is available which allows you to buy Termidor or Talstar without a license. Both are approved to use outside the house only where you will spray outside walls and the ground surrounding the house. Follow the label instructions carefully when applying either of these pesticides, paying special attention to the concerns of use around open bodies of water. When using either of these sprays, you will need to have a copy of the section 18 exemption. You can download the form from the link listed below.

To barrier the house from the inside you can use any contact ant and roach spray listed for inside use in the home. Spray around all doors, windows and other openings in your house. Repeated sprayings both inside and out will be required. Again, read and follow directions listed on the product.

Once you have sprayed, there will be dead ants everywhere. Clean up the dead ants both inside and out. The first ants will crawl over the poison, die and, as you get

an ant build-up, this provides protection from the poison. It is thus important you keep the area clean in order to keep the insecticide working as long as possible.

For more details go to <http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/ants/raspberry.html>. Exemption forms are available at the bottom of the above-mentioned web page.



Dealing With Bee Swarms

what do you do when honeybees move in?



By Tim Jahnke
MG 2011

Question: Do you have anyone that can remove honey bees from my tree?

The Master Gardener Hotline receives many calls requesting help with honey bees in or near their homes. Sometimes the bees are in a swarm, on a tree branch or in a shrub; sometimes the bees have established a hive in a utility box or in a wall of their home. A mass of several thousand honey bees can be frightening. Callers worry about the safety of their family and pets. For questions about or help with honey bees, call the Galveston Master Gardener Hotline (281-534-3413 ext. 11).

What is a bee swarm?

Honey bees reproduce their colony by sending the old queen and about half of the worker bees to establish a new nest. This usually happens in the spring but it can occur anytime when conditions are suitable. Scouts fly out to find a site for the new hive before the bees begin the relocation. A moving group of 5,000 to 20,000 honey bees can be scary. European honey bees (common honey producers in Texas) are quite docile. They should not pose much danger if left undisturbed but will sting if provoked. This is not true of Africanized honey bees. All bees should be given lots of space. The relocating honey bees will form a cluster at a temporary spot a few hundred yards for their original hive. The cluster of honey bees is the bee swarm. The scouts indicate the potential new home through a dance. The swarm then moves to the new site.

Honey bees like cavities with a volume of more than four gallons, above nine feet from the ground that they can defend. However they will establish a nest in hollow trees, chimneys, outbuildings, water meters, utility boxes, shrubs, fences, soffits, barbecue grills, under decks and in walls.

What do you do when honey bees move in?

If honey bees are in your area, you have to determine what to do with them. If they

are in a swarm in a temporary location they may move away in a few days. If they are in the open they can be captured and relocated by a beekeeper. There are several local beekeepers that will remove bee swarms or hives if they are accessible. If the honey bees have established a hive in your house, like in a wall cavity, then you have a major problem. Bee hives in your walls must be removed. You have to decide whether to have the bees removed or exterminated. In either case the walls must be opened and bees, honeycomb and honey removed. The excavation work can be expensive.

Problems with exterminating honey bees and leaving bee hives in place:

- Some kill the bees in place with insecticides. Leaving honey and the honeycomb in the walls can create serious long term problems.
- Leaving dead bee bodies rotting in place can produce a very serious odor problem.
- Honey in combs will ferment, run down the wall and into the house.
- Wax moths can lay eggs in the honeycomb. When the moth larva develops it can invade your home. This happened to one of our Hotline callers.
- A decaying bee hive can cause extensive damage to your home. Repairs can cost more than initially removing the hive when it is discovered.

Preventing honey bee invasions: Preventing honey bee invasion can be simple. Honey bees want easy access for their hive. Sealing entry points prevents them from establishing a hive in your home.

- Seal all holes larger than the diameter of a pencil.
- Screen large openings (six or more meshes per inch).
- Fill cavities with expandable foam.
- Screen chimneys.

Honey bees are valuable partners of the gardening community: When they pollinate flowers, productivity of our farms and gardens increase. Honey bees have had a massive die-off over the past six years. Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) has resulted in the loss of an estimated 10 million bee hives. If honey bees move into your area try to have them captured and relocated by a beekeeper.



From TAMU publication E-346
A honey bee swarm (Photo courtesy of B. Pierson.)



by John Jons
MG 2003

learn the five-step pruning process

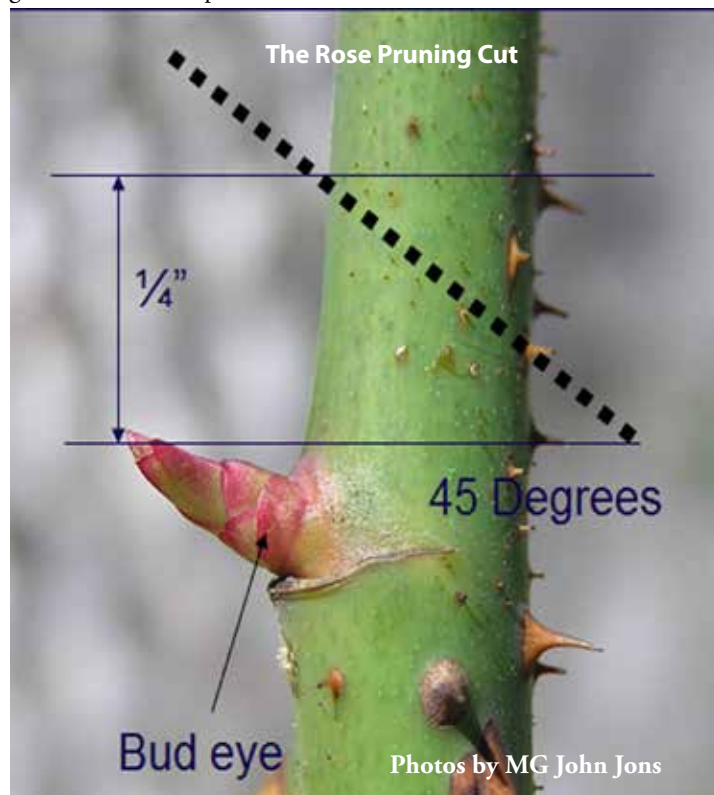
Pruning Roses



In Galveston and Harris Counties (south of Interstate 10), it is suggested that you prune your roses after Valentine's Day. The reason for picking this date is that after you prune a rose it will start to put on its new growth, and you do not want the new growth to suffer any kind of freeze damage. Although in past years we have seen record low (and high) temperatures in March, most roses that successfully grow in our area do not seem to have a problem with our mild cold temperatures.

A common rose pruning joke among Rosarians is that if you ask ten Rosarians how to prune a rose you may get fifteen different answers. The reason for this is that for each of the different classifications of roses, there are different ways of pruning. Each gardener and each plant may have its own unique pruning needs. For this article I am going to keep the subject of rose pruning simple. As Liz Druit in her book *The Organic Rose Garden* states, "Pruning a rose is not unlike giving a home haircut to a small child. You do the best you can, secure in the knowledge that if it turns out odd looking, new growth will quickly hide your mistakes."

When you prune roses always wear gloves (gauntlet gloves are best) and make sure your tetanus shot is up-to-date as you may get scratched by rose thorns. Only use bypass pruners (see graphic above) to prune roses versus anvil pruners as the bypass pruners will slice the rose cane and the anvil pruner will crush and damage the cut end of the rose cane. When you prune the rose cane, cut the cane on live (green) tissue about 1/4" at about a 45 degree angle and above an outward facing bud (see photo). The reason you cut above an outward facing bud is that you want the new growth to grow out from the plant.



The five-step rose pruning process that I teach in my rose pruning seminar is quite simple and it is as follows:

1. Plan the prune. First look at the rose and ask yourself, "Is this rose a keeper?" There are so many good roses that there is no sense in wasting good garden space on a plant that you are not happy with. If you elect to keep the rose, think about what do you want the rose's final shape to be? How should it look in the landscape?
2. Remove the (four D's) dead, diseased, damaged and dinky rose canes. Put on the gloves. Start by looking at the base of the rose. Identify the strong, healthy canes that will support next year's growth. Then identify the undesirables such as the grey, dry and unhealthy looking wood and the canes that need to be removed to either shape or open-up the rose plant.
3. Open up the plant to improve air circulation and sun exposure to promote healthy new growth. Remove canes that are crossing over or crowding each other.
4. Shape the plant to meet your needs. Keep in mind the growth habit of the type of rose you are growing and prune accordingly (more on this a bit later in this article). In some cases you may have a rose that is growing out of bounds. Now is a good time to cut it back to where you want it to be.
5. You should clean up and remove everything you have pruned off the rose. You may also want to consider spraying the rose with a fungicide and insecticide.

As I previously mentioned, different classifications of roses require different pruning considerations. For example:

A hybrid tea is a plant that may be 3 to 7+ feet tall with one large flower to a stem. Hybrid Teas are typically grown on the root stock of another vigorous growing rose plant. They are ideal for cut flowers.

- Remove wood near the end of its productive life as the best blooms will come from healthy, sturdy new canes.
- Cut out the weak (thin) canes, useless branches, horizontal growth and suckers (root stock growth below the bud union).
- Keep around 4 to 8 good canes cut 12" - 24" (from the graft).
- Strip off all the remaining leaves. The old leaves may contain fungus or may be hiding bugs.
- Spray with a fungicide or insecticide



everything you ever wanted to know about pruning roses

Grandifloras are an upright hybrid-tea-type plant. Flowers grow in clusters. They can be pruned like a hybrid tea.

Shrubs are hardy plants, which are generally quite large and may produce blooms throughout the growing season. These roses are typically grown as landscape plants. Prune to meet the needs of your landscape.

Floribundas are usually a compact bush that has flowers smaller than hybrid-teas and grow in clusters. If it is grown on grafted root-stock, it can be treated like a hybrid tea. If it is grown on its own roots, prune like a shrub but with the care of a hybrid team.

Polyanthas are like floribundas but often are large bushes. Prune like a shrub.

Climbers produce long canes that produce blooms along the canes. Some varieties only produce blooms in the spring. Newer varieties may produce blooms throughout the growing season.

- Determine where you want the plant to climb.
- Old-fashioned rambling roses and one-time bloomers should not be pruned until after they flower.
- Some climbing varieties tend to prefer light pruning.
- Some climbing varieties may take three or more years to reach maturity.
- Unless it a control issue, prune to keep in bounds.
- Train the canes to go horizontal or the climber may only produce blooms at the end of the season. See photos.
- Clip at the ends to keep in control.

Miniatures are small plants that grow between 6" to 36" tall.

- If it grows like a hybrid tea, prune it like a hybrid tea.
- If it grows like a shrub, prune it like a shrub.
- If it grows like a climber, prune it like a climber.
- Newly planted roses typically require minimal pruning.
- Prune to meet needs or cut back to about half its size.
- Shape to meet needs of landscape.
- For landscape, miniatures create a nice bushy growing habit.

Tree roses are roses that are grafted onto a tall trunk. It may be a hybrid-tea, floribunda or miniature.

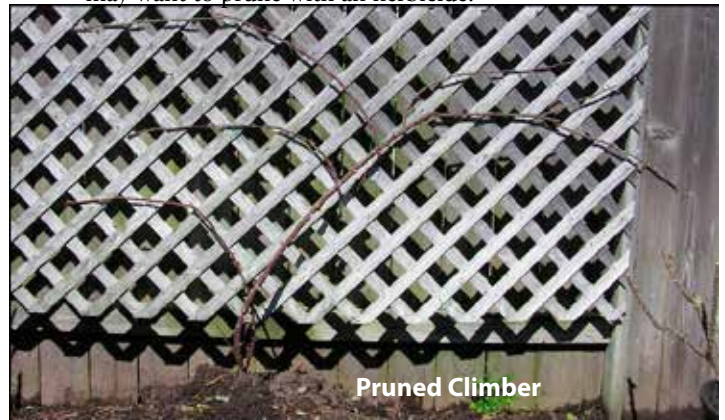
- Never prune the main upright trunk.
- Know what kind of rose is grafted onto the tree stock (the head).
- Prune according to the type of rose graft on the tree stock.
- Most tree roses require moderate pruning as hard pruning may cause vigorous growing canes that will affect the shape of the plant.
- Shape to result in an attractive plant with the desired symmetry.
- The head of the rose plant (at the top of the trunk) should have a domed shape.

Old Garden Roses (OGRs) contain many subclasses and were typically bred before 1867.

- You need to know what type or variety of rose it is to prune appropriately.
- Study its growing habits before pruning.
- Allow young plants one or two seasons of growth before pruning.
- For once-a-year blooming roses, prune immediately after flowering.
- If it is continuous flowering, prune at the same time as modern roses.
- Clean out dead, diseased, badly crowded and non-productive wood.
- May need to prune mature plants to keep in control.

- When in doubt – do nothing.
 - Training and shaping is often more important than pruning.
- Listed below are some pruning suggestions for some specific OGR subclasses.

- Rosa Multiflora blooms only on new wood. After blooming, old wood may be cut away to encourage new canes.
- Tea Roses are slow to develop so prune lightly. Cutting the blooms may be sufficient.
- For Rugosas, pruning may create die-back and may eventually need control with a chain-saw.
- Species Roses (wild roses) require little or no pruning. Some wild roses in our area are considered invasive and you may want to prune with an herbicide.



Pruned Climber



Climbers - Train the canes to go horizontal to encourage blooms on the canes

The Impact of a Hard Freeze on Roses

The typical hard freezes that we normally experience in Galveston and Harris Counties (south of Interstate 10) tends to have minimal to no impact on most of the roses that we grow successfully in our area. In our winter some roses may go dormant, whereas, other roses may slow down in their growth and bloom production. This dormancy provides the rose plants with some degree of cold tolerance.

Some roses are actually bred to perform well in cold climates. If you have one of these roses, it may perform particularly well during our winter time, but for the rest of the year it will perform rather mediocly. For example, cold hardy roses, like the Rugosas that are very floriferous, hardy and disease resistant, struggle to grow in our area and rarely, if ever produce blooms.

Roses that may be affected by very cold weather are modern roses (roses hybridized after 1867) and Old Garden Roses (roses hybridized before 1867) that have in their lineage species roses (wild roses) that are native to a warm climate. The cold impact to these roses may be a mild wind burn of the leaves or the blooms may freeze and fall off the plant. Unhealthy rose plants may succumb to the freezing weather.



By Donna J. Ward
MG 1996

don't cut back too early

TROWELS & TRIBULATIONS in a Suburban Garden

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

Were you as confused last month as I? January temps alternated winter-like days with spring-like days, and this back-and-forth interchange also confused our landscape plants. I know spring is just around the corner, but believe me, Mother Nature is not above messin' with us another time or two up until mid-February. I know you want to get out there with your pruners and cut off the scraggly results of a few cold nights, but cutting back too early could result in new growth that might get nipped if Mom releases another cold snap. Cut if you must to tidy up, but don't cut down into 'green'—wait until spring sends out new green shoots—then prune to your desired length.

Speaking of pruning, this is the month to prune roses—traditionally done on Valentine's Day. This triggers healthy new growth. Learn to thin as you prune—roses like good air circulation, so keep your hybrids at 3-5 canes. You'll have less trouble with blackspot, mildew and insects if you do. Feed them later this month and every 30 days through June, and oh, don't forget the mulch. But don't prune those climbers as yet; wait until their boom cycle is finished. (See a detailed rose pruning article by MG John Jons on page 6)

Some of those summer perennials might not have performed up to your expectations, so you might want to consider dividing and resetting them. They might be rebelling against being root bound. Give them a bit more room to spread out—find the sharp-shooter and dig and divide those daylilies, daisies, hardy phlox, salvia and ferns.

If you hurry, and I do mean hurry, you still have time to transplant mature (within reason) established trees and shrubs. Just remember that you have to prune top growth to compensate for the root growth that will be lost when the plant is dug. A shrub with a 5 ft. limb spread can't be supported by a 3 ft. root spread.

Please refrain from committing 'crape murder' as many homeowners are prone to do in February for some unknown reason. "My neighbor did it, so it must be right." Says who? Why would you want to promote spindly, weak growth and ruin the architectural integrity of these 'lilacs of the south'? Leave those crape myrtles alone and let them be the shapely, dappled shade provider that nature intended for them to be.

At the risk of repeating myself (but I do it each year) refrain from fertilizing your St. Augustine lawn even though you are chomping at the bit to do so. A warm breeze wafting through the neighborhood for some reason makes us want to jump-start the lawn. Control yourself. At this time you will only be jump-starting cool weather weeds. St. Augustine doesn't even think about growing until the weather has sufficiently warmed, so too early fertilization is an exercise in futility, not to mention a waste of time and money. But—the weeds will love you!

Of course we planned ahead and spent part of winter preparing the vegetable bed for spring planting. Oh, you forgot? Me too, but it's not too late to dig in a bit of compost and plant that vegetable garden. February is ideal for planting seeds of radish, spinach, turnips, mustard greens, kohlrabi, lettuce, collards, carrots, green on-

ions, beets, English and snap peas. I know you've heard that it's too early to plant corn, but it's not. Our best corn crops have traditionally been planted on February 14. You will have eaten (and hopefully frozen) fresh corn on the cob when your neighbors are fighting those icky corn worms that show up as soon as the weather gets warm.

And if all this hasn't been enough to keep you busy, I'll check in with you later—March is coming.....



THE ISLAND GARDEN

Bird-of-Paradise

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



By Jan Brick
MG 2001

A real stunner in any setting—easy care—evergreen with long-lasting sensational blooms! What more could we ask of any plant?

Common names include *Strelitzia*, Crane Flower or Bird-of-paradise, *Strelitzia reginae* is native to South Africa and cousin to the banana plant. Its scientific name commemorates Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, who was queen consort of the United Kingdom. It was first pioneered in Europe in 1773 at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and then in time widely introduced around the world. In the United States, Florida and California are the main areas of cultivation. It is a common ornamental plant in Southern California, and has been chosen as the Official Flower of Los Angeles.

Bird-of-paradise or crane flower derives its common names from the unique flower it bears, which resembles a brightly colored bird in flight. The six inch wide and nearly eighteen inch long leathery leaves are held upright on stiff leafstalks. The showy bloom is actually a "combination of blue petals and orange sepals that emerge from a beak-like bract (modified leaf)." The blooms will appear intermittently through most of the year. Healthy, mature plants can turn out as many as three dozen flower spikes in one year. Bird-of-paradise usually produces blooms along the outside of the plant so when planting, space the plants at least six feet apart to allow adequate space for flowering.

Considered to be a slow maturing species, the Bird-of-paradise will grow in most soils, but will thrive in fertile, organic soil with good drainage. For good bloom production, place plants in sunny or partially shaded locations. Plants grown in partial shade will be taller and have somewhat larger flowers, while those placed in full sun may be smaller with flowers on shorter stems. The Bird-of-paradise will tolerate some light salt spray but should not be used in exposed locations near the salt water.

As with all plants, the first six months of care may determine the health and success of the recently introduced plant to its new home in your garden. Dry or soggy conditions may cause the leaves of your plant to yellow and die. However, once established the bird-of-paradise prefers frequent watering from rainfall or irrigation during the warm growing season. During the off-season and through the winter months, the plants should be watered only when the soil is dry.

The Bird-of-paradise requires some fertilization to attain its best growth and flowering potential. Spreading an organic fertilizer like blood meal, a granular landscape fertilizer like 13-13-13 or a slow release fertilizer like Osmocote every three months during the growing season will help to ensure that goal. Removing any spent or dead tissue from around the plant will reduce the chance of fungal organisms increase the pleasing aesthetics of your 'bird'.

Common organic mulch materials such as leaves, pine needles, bark or wood chips are recommended to help conserve moisture and to control weeds around the base of the plants—inorganic materials like gravel and crushed stone are also suitable.

Growing well in any area that is sunny and warm, Bird of-paradise is very popular as an ornamental plant. The three-to-five foot tall clump can be used as a focal point in the landscape or in mass plantings—blooms may last up to two weeks when cut for floral arrangements—it will tolerate temperatures as low as 24°F for a short time (however, freezing temperatures will damage developing flower buds and flowers)—and as an added bonus the evergreen leaves of Bird-of-paradise do not drop from the plant making it an excellent addition around pools or wherever shedding leaves are an aesthetic or maintenance problem.

Another Bird-of-paradise that you may want to consider is the Giant White Bird of paradise, (*Strelitzia nicolai*).

Description:

12 to 15 foot clumping plant; dark green leaves up to 4 feet long and 2 feet wide; foot-long flowers between leaves on long stems, borne on mahogany-brown to indigo boat-like bracts with petals that are white to mauve with a dark blue tongue

Pests and Diseases

No significant pest or disease

Fertilizer, Light, Moisture & Soil

Balanced formula in spring

Full or partial sun

Water regularly; do not overwater

Clay; sand; loam; well-drained

Propagation

Division of root ball

Uses

Specimen plant; deck or patio container



Photo by MG Sandra Devall

Bird of Paradise

MG BEST SHOTS



1
Pots in a Garden Bed by MG Patricia Martin



2
Calibrachoa in a Wheelbarrel by MG Donna Ward



3
Seasonal Plants by MG Frank Jackson



4
Herbs by MG Judy Poorman



5
Humor in Containers by GCMG Digital Library



6
Bonsai Garden by MG Clyde Holt

...and Narrative outside container gardening



Planting in containers adds lots of new opportunities to gardeners. Containers give contrast, flexibility and ease of gardening.

They also bring an option to apartment dwellers and those with small yards. You can also change your mind about where a specific plant should be located without waiting for the correct transplanting season. Vegetables and miniature fruit trees will also survive in containers. For example, you can maintain a tomato, pepper or some herbs in a pot. Just watch the vegetables carefully as they will need to be watered frequently during our very hot days.

In Garden Beds - Photo 1 was chosen because of the additional viewing benefit as you can see the containers from inside and outside the house. This view from the outside also shows the softening divider of the space formed for the edge of a bed into the yard by the containers. This also gives a good solution to necessary winter protection for tropicals. Rather than run around putting protective covers over your plants when the weather service says to cover your plants—just roll your container plants to a protective area like inside the sun porch or the garage.

Re-purposed Containers - If you are looking for an easy to grow, compact, bushy, prolific bloomer that cascades gracefully over the edges of almost any container you choose, requires no deadheading, and loves a sunny location—calibrachoa is for you Photo 2. This little 6 to 10-inch relative of the petunia will spread over your flower beds and reward you with hundreds of petunia-like blooms in purple, red, yellow, white, and now a new blackberry punch. This little beauty will reward you with blooms from spring till frost. They are heat tolerant in zones 9 - 11 provided you keep them watered, and if by chance you neglect to water, they will perk up quickly when you do. Mine is planted in a plain wooden box, but they look great in a hanging basket or any container that will let them trail over the edges. They are the go-to source of nectar for hummers and butterflies.

Seasonal Annuals - It was difficult to choose a photo for this category. There are so many seasonal annuals that look good in

containers because it shows them off and also allows you to buy a few annuals and still get nice landscape appeal. On the practical side, you could *By Sandra Devall* also plant seasonal vegetables in large containers. *MG 1998* That container can sit in the same place all year long and you just change the resident. Hardy spring annuals that are showy and last the whole season are begonias (like in photo 3), periwinkles, geraniums, petunias, caladium, coleus and small zinnias; winter annuals would be cyclamens, poinsettias, and pansies. MG Laura Bellmore tells us that this year she is harvesting arugula, mesculin (fancy lettuce), bib lettuce, radishes and carrots from large pots on her patio. See Photo 4 planted with herbs. Find your favorite for each season and just alternate with these each season. Once you find your location, be sure to check to make sure your plant works well in that shady or sunny area.

Humor in Containers - I always make sure that my garden entertains as well as gives a place to pause. There is always a container that is good for a few laughs and a good conversation. I also love the pots shaped like heads that you can fill with plants that look like hair. And, do not forget the old washtubs that will lead to wonderful stories for our grandchildren. The bathtub drain is convenient for the necessary drain (Photo 5). However, some humorous pots may need to have a hole drilled into the bottom of them, but what fun!

Groupings of Plants - This beautiful example of bonsai comes from the home of MG Clyde Holt. He is our bonsai expert. He has covered a very boring wall of his garage with this arrangement of plants (Photo 6). This rack has become the showcase of all the best bonsai and each is in a beautiful container. Herbs, succulents, cactus, ferns or any other smaller plants may be your favorite. An arrangement like this helps you keep your eyes on these special plants. You may want to look for small racks to handle three or four of your favorite pot plants to not only show off the plants, but also the beautiful containers.

care of container plants

Container gardening is a great choice if you have limited space, time and gardening experience. With a little research and advance planning, you can have precision and beauty. This movable garden adds visual accents to outdoor living spaces and landscapes. Container gardens can also be relocated and adapted for indoor beauty following simple maintenance requirements.

When choosing the location for your container garden, make note of the sun's patterns as an aide in plant selections and placement. Partial shade means morning sun before 11 a.m. or late afternoon sun after 3:00 p.m. This is one of the beauties of the movable garden, easy relocation for optimal light conditions.

Containers come in every style and color. Be creative choosing your containers. See some of our pictured examples. It is most important that the container has a drain hole in its bottom to allow excess water to escape. If container plants are allowed to sit in water, the roots will rot. Be sure to choose a container that will allow ample room for root growth.

Watering is crucial to the livelihood of a container garden. It is best to water in the morning. If your plant is looking sickly, you may be over watering. Check the moisture by putting your finger in the soil to see if the soil is dry. Rainwater is excellent but plants will tolerate tap water. Water is just as important during the winter but moisture levels may differ from warmer months.

Soil is important in all gardens but vital to containers. Buying a bag of sterile garden or potting soil for containers is good. It is best

to not use soil from the ground or garden because of insects and weed seeds that may be in that soil. Try combining one part peat moss, one part perlite, one part compost, and one part good sterile garden soil. You should add a slow release fertilizer that will last about six months as plants in containers need added nutrients. For soil recipes to accommodate the differing needs of all plants try www.finegardening.com and search for soil recipes.

Once the soil is in your container, the fun and creativity of plant selection and container designs begins. Choose plants with compatible light and watering requirements for each container. Include a plant to bring height to the arrangement, others to serve as fillers and then those to cascade over the sides. Think of your selection as a thriller, a filler and a spiller. Use a color theme in your plants that will complement the container. Consider herb gardens, salad and veggie gardens, hanging gardens and even butterfly gardens.

Insects and diseases happen in all horticultural situations. However, problems are easier to spot in container plants. Removal and destroying damaged, diseased leaves and using a fungicide will take care of black spot, botrytis, powdery mildew, and rust. Common pests can be controlled with natural predators, hand picking, insecticidal soaps, and water sprays. Never reuse soil from an affected plant. You may want to isolate a diseased plant as you treat it.

Basically, almost any gardening done in your landscape can be accomplished in containers. Anything goes!



by Kaye Corey
MG 2001



By Herman Auer
MG 1983

don't get in a hurry to trim Pruning Trees After Low Temperatures

Pruning in the spring is crucial to the health of most plants. Our recent cold snaps have created some unsightly plants in our gardens. It is best, however, to wait until you see the development of new growth before beginning your trimming. New growth will help you determine just what is alive and what is not. Freeze-injured wood can be identified by examining the cambium layer of the tree (that is, the food conducting tissue beneath the bark). Use your fingernail to lightly scratch away a small area of the bark to look for green. Trim away only the areas that are brown as those branches are dead.

Once you have trimmed away the weather damaged areas, it is also important to trim away growth that interferes with a healthy flow of air through the tree. You will want to trim any branches that interfere with walkways, buildings or other plants. Consider the overall appearance of your tree as it matures and trim to maintain a pleasing appearance.

For citrus trees, if tree limbs are dead all the way back to the ground, then the tree may need to be removed. At this time I would cut it back severely and give it some more time to see if any new growth comes from the ground or above the graft terminal. In the event new growth comes from the ground or the rootstock, this plant is a good candidate for grafting. It is important to be patient with your citrus trees.

On deciduous fruit trees, pruning limbs that are pointed inward, rubbing, are limbs that are too close together can be removed for better air flow through the tree can help reduce fungus problems.

If your pear or apple trees have fire blight, the affected limbs can be removed by making cuts approximately 18 inches below the infected limbs and cleaning the tools with 10% Clorox water between each cut.

For other landscape plants that appear to be dead, you might want to delay removing this plant entirely as it may surprise you by

sending up new shoots from the roots as the weather warms.

There is no need to paint a sealer on the cut surfaces of trimmed trees or plants.

If you are planting bare root trees this time of year, it is recommended that after planting, reduce the top by one-half in order to balance the root system with the top. Many people that do not practice this order or trees the following year to replace the ones that failed to grow.



Citrus with freeze damage.



Peach tree after summer pruning when the new wood is beginning to come out.



Wait for new growth before pruning.

you can only guess at the outcome

The First Hybridized Rose Seedling of the Year



*By John Jons
MG 2003*

The picture illustrates my first hybridized rose seedling of this year. Hybridizing (breeding) roses tends to be like gambling. Only wild (species) roses breed true from seed. All other roses are hybrids (bred by a man or women). So when you hybridize from hybrid roses you never really know what you will end up with. You can be delightfully surprised by the results. It's like breeding a German Shepherd Dog to a Dachshund, you can only guess at the outcome. But the rose that you successfully hybridized will be totally unique, one of a kind, and can be registered, patented and named by you the hybridizer. For example, the rose breeder Bill Radler that hybridized, registered, patented and named the rose Knock Out® only produced one Knock Out® rose plant. The millions of Knock Out® roses that we see everywhere today were not (cannot be) produced by seeds from other Knock Out® roses, but by cuttings (or other) rose propagation techniques from that one original rose plant.

My rose hybridizing objective is to produce a hardy (think Earth-Kind™) rose that continually (all year long) produces lots of vibrant or unique color blooms that have lots of petals (full—26 or more). The roses that I use for hybridizing are primarily my own roses. Although, I will sometimes borrow pollen from other roses. I prefer and grow roses that continually produce lots of vibrant or unique color blooms, that have lots of petals and are proven to require minimal care (hardy—rated 8.3 /10 or higher in the “American Rose Society Handbook for Selecting Roses” Handbook) and are fertile. Just like not all roses are hardy, not all roses are fertile.

When I first started hybridizing roses I followed all the rules based upon the information available. I quickly discovered that to hybridize roses properly took considerable time and effort. I discovered that under the best of circumstances that for amateur rose hybridizer's seed germination and seedling success is quite low. So the rose hybridizing process that I use now is quite basic and a lot more fun. My process is as follows:

In March, I start cross pollenating (like a bee) the first blooms. I continue pollenating until June. Successful pollinations result in hips (seed containers). Not all roses will produce hips. For example, some varieties of roses will not breed with each other (due ploidy - a miss-match in chromosomes), they may not be fertile or be just male or female fertile or simply just difficult to breed. Plus, then the hips may just abort or rot, or be inadvertently dead-headed, and sometimes garden creatures, trolls and elves will steal the hips. When possible, I keep documentation on my hybridizing efforts.

From about June to October I harvest the mature hips. I put the hips in my refrigerator and stratify them for at least six weeks or more.

Around November, when it is forecasted that the outside temperature will start dropping to around 50F or lower, I remove the stratified seeds from inside the hips. I soak the seeds in a fungicide for about 24 hours. I then plant all the seeds about 1/4” to 1/2” deep in garden soil filled flats and place them in an open to the weather but lightly shaded spot in my garden. Rose seeds germinate in about

a month in temperatures between 35-50F. I have had seedlings germinate that were apparently dormant in the soil for over 2 years. The seedlings seem to grow best when the temperatures are between 50-70F. When the seedlings are about 1” tall, I repot them in 2”x2” pots.

After about 2 months, the seedling will produce its first flower. I initially assess the seedling's bloom color and quality, foliage and growth habit. The seedlings I plan to keep, I repot in 1 gallon pots.

As I want to breed hardy roses, I do not baby (provide extra horticultural care) to the seeds or seedling in any way. Consequently, I find that only about 5% or less of the seeds germinate. When the rose seedling emerges from the soil, the mortality rate is also high as some of the following may happen; damping off (stem rot); fizzle up as soon as the sun hits them; fungus attack; insects and my dog eat them and more unknown stuff kills them. After the seedlings are transplanted into one-gallon pots, nature continues to cull them. Plus, as I only have a small garden, if they do not look like they are going to meet my hybridizing objectives, I give them away.

About a year or even two years later, the remaining seedlings are planted in my garden and get to hang out with the big roses. Nature still continues to cull the seedlings.

About three years later, I have very few of the rose seedlings left but the remaining seedlings meet my hybridizing objectives.

If you would like to learn more about rose hybridization you can get additional information from Texas A&M, Aggie Horticulture (<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/publications/roses/fragrance.html>) or the Rose Hybridizers Association (<http://www.rosehybridizers.org/>).



The first hybridized rose seedling of the year



By Barbra Markey
MG Intern 2013



By Gene Speller
MG 1997

an excessive enthusiasm Peppermania



Gene's Pepper Vinegar

Mania! A term you would not think to pair with the word pepper. Upon closer examination, you will see it is an excellent choice.

Mania is defined as excessive enthusiasm. Karl Abraham says, "The onset of mania occurs when repression is no longer able to resist the assaults of the repressed instincts." Jeff Bridges is quoted as saying, "mania is a wonderful feeling." I believe pepper growers recognize mania.

Chile peppers are perennial flowering plants, usually grown as annuals. If protected from frost, they will maintain their ability to reproduce. Chile peppers are in the night shade family SOLANACEAE. They are not to be confused with the common black pepper spice plant. Other vegetables in the SOLANACEAE family include eggplant, potato and tomato.

The chile pepper genus *Capsicum* includes five domesticated species: *annuum*, *chinense*, *baccatum*, *frutescens* and *pubescens*. Of these, the most commonly cultivated are in the species *Annuum*—such as ancho, bell, cayenne, cherry, jalapeno, ornamental, pequin, and serrano. The hottest type varieties (habanero, ghost, scorpion and reaper) are in the *Chinense* species.

Up for a road trip? Visit the Public Teaching Demonstration Gardens at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico. On display are over 200 pepper varieties. Look closely and find a few to peak your interest; they even let you pick a few.

Capsaicin is the active chemical component of chile peppers that makes them hot. It is an irritant for humans and other mammals, but does not affect birds. It can cause a burning sensation when it comes in contact with tissue, especially mucous membranes. If this happens, cold milk is the most effective treatment.

Chile peppers are believed to have originated in South and Central America and were first domesticated by native Indians there. They were introduced by the Spanish and Portuguese to South Asia. Christopher Columbus named them. Chile pepper also known as: chilli, chili, aji, paprika and capsicum. Names can be used interchangeably for plants and pods of this genus.

Chile peppers contain more vitamin A than other plants or vegetables. As the fruit matures and dries, the vitamin content increases. They are also an excellent source of vitamins C and B. Chile peppers help burn calories by triggering a "thermodynamic burn" which increases the metabolic rate.

So, you want to become a member of the "Peppermania Club"? Here are a few tips before you begin.

Seeds can be obtained either from local garden centers, friends, or seed catalogues. In Galveston County, we start plants indoors, in order to optimize the correct timing for fruit set. We need to start seeds eight weeks prior to planting in order to have strong healthy seedlings. If you start your seeds on February 1, you should be able to plant on

April 1. Ideal temperature for germination is 70-75 degrees F. Contact your local county Extension Office to determine the preeminent time to initiate the process.

Keep in mind that it is important to use the right fertilizer for the seedlings. Use a dilute solution of balanced, water soluble fertilizer 15-15-15. For young seedlings (1 or 2 sets of true leaves), use ¼ teaspoon fertilizer per gallon of water. For older plants (with an additional 2 or 3 sets of true leaves), use ½ teaspoon of fertilizer per gallon of water. Water seedlings with fertilizer water as needed to maintain moisture. You may choose planting trays with potting soil, peat pots or sponge cells for your seeds.

Germination can take anywhere from 10 days to 2 weeks, with the hot peppers taking longer. It is paramount to use the hardening off technique with your plants. One or two weeks prior to planting gradually expose the seedling to the wind and sun beginning with a few hours to several days prior to planting. Eight hours of full sun is best in well-drained loam or sandy soil. Optimum day temperature is 70 to 75 degrees

with night temperatures at 60 to 70 degrees.

Avoid deep planting and space 18"- 24" apart. Use tomato cages for support and protection with plastic around or over cages for cold protection. Dark mulch helps maintain warmer soil.

Fertilize established plants at first bloom and again at three week intervals until harvest. Ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) is a good choice. Provide a narrow well about 2" wide and 2" deep around base of plant and water in well.

Leaf-footed bugs, stink bugs and red spider mites adore peppers. Watch for and control bugs at the juvenile and nymph stage with a Pyrethrin spray. Insecticidal soaps will control mites.

There are many pepper varieties. Generally, the best tasting sweet ones have the most color with red being the best. Anaheim and sahuaro chiles have slight pungency with good flavor. Serrano are the best tasting hotter type. Chiltepin and tabasco make good pepper vinegar. For the hottest varieties, choose the ghost trinidad moruga scorpion or the carolina reaper.



Gene's fresh pepper varieties above include: Sahuaro, Bulgarian Carrot, Red Knight, Blushing Beauty, Serrano del Sol, Super Heavy weight, Orange Sun, Giant Marconi, Bhuron Hybrid, Chichimeca.

Seasonal Bites

Speller's Picante Sauce Recipe

[For 12 pints] *

INGREDIENTS:

Tomatoes - approximately 36 ripe, medium size, fresh ripe tomatoes (homegrown are best). **

Onion - 2 cups, chopped.

Sweet peppers - 1 cup (Red or orange bell are best. Green bell okay).

Hot peppers - 1/2 cup to 2 cups, depending on variety and

desired pungency. ***

Cilantro - 1/2 cup of fresh chopped leaves. (Remove stems before chopping.)

Basil - (sweet basil) 1/2 cup of fresh chopped leaves.

Salt - 2 tablespoons

Sugar - 2 tablespoons

PROCESS:

(Step 1) Core and peel tomatoes (dip in hot, then ice cold water first).

(Step 2) Chop tomatoes in blender to desired consistency. **

(Step 3) Combine ingredients in large pot and stew for 30 minutes.

(Step 4) Place contents in canning jars, pints or quarts.

(Step 5) Process for another 20 minutes in the jars, using standard canning procedures for canning tomatoes. *

Enjoy the sauce! It goes well with tortilla chips, fish, eggs, rice, and whatever suits your taste buds.

NOTES:

* When canning (Step No. 5), it's more practical to process in large batches (> 12 pints). Canned products are generally good for a year or longer. If not canning, skip Step No. 5. Smaller batches (2 or 3 pints) may be more practical for eating fresh. Refrigerator shelf life is good for 1 or 2 weeks.

** The salsa can be thickened by (A) using Roma/salad/paste type tomatoes and/or by (B) straining the tomatoes and separating the juice from the pulp before adding the other ingredients. The fresh tomato juice is excellent!

*** Relative heat value/pungency for some peppers:

Pepper	Approximate Heat Value (Hottest to sweetest) (~Scoville Units)
Ghost (aka Bhut Jolokia)	1,000,000
Habanero	500,000
Chiltepin	100,000
Cayenne	50,000
Serrano	10,000
Jalapeno	5,000
Poblano	1,000
Sahuaro / New Mexico Chiles	500
Bell peppers	0



Photos by MG Gene Speller

Gene's Picante Sauce

Jalapenos and serranos have the best flavor, but they do not retain their heat value when processed in the sauce and canned. Haberanans retain heat value, but are not as flavorful as Serranos. It is best to mix these peppers to suit your taste and desired pungency.



Serrano Pepper



Chiltepin Pepper



Tabasco Pepper



Ghost Pepper

Project: Demonstration Gardens

Carbide Park



*By Tom Fountain
MG 2008*



The last couple of months have been a little slow at the garden. Holiday activities and winter illnesses helped by cold, damp weather have sidelined some gardeners from coming out. There have been a few heavy frosts and a day or two where overnight temperatures were below freezing for several hours. We have continued to be dryer than normal with only one fourth of our normal rainfall for December and January, although it rained almost 15 days over the period. Let's hope this is not the trend for our new year.

We have always had a great group of gardeners that come out to work, and it doesn't make a difference to most if the weather is cold, hot, or plain wet.



Besides the day-to-day gardening projects that we always have there are several building projects underway. Henry and Stewart and the bedding group are continuing along nicely. This group has only about a half- dozen beds left to refurbish. The greenhouse crew has finished putting in a walkway and they have the drainage ready for them to gravel the work area. Also, the greenhouse door framing has begun. The next part of this project will be to cover the frame, put in lighting, water, and workbenches. Tish and Alisa continue to expand and develop the serenity and "low water use" gardens and make them look great. Robert, Jackie, and a few others are pruning the trees in the orchard.



Some of the many benefits of being a Master Gardener and working in the garden include lots of opportunities to learn new skills and meet new people—like the church group from League City that is looking to put in a community garden. We also have our remarkable kitchen crew of Ed, O.J., Greg, and Ira. They always manage to provide us with an excellent lunch and a time to visit. Hope you are having a Happy New Year and your menu includes some time with us in the garden!



By Alisa Rasmussen
MG 2011

nature and technology

First QR Code in the Garden

We are excited to announce that after placing the first QR (quick response) code out in the Earth-Kind® Demonstration Garden at Carbide Park in December, it is still functioning and more QR codes will be forthcoming. Master Gardeners Alisa Rasmussen and Gregory Werth are collaborating to create many of the QR codes and links to their created web pages on some of the larger and more unique plants in the garden. For now, however, Dr. Dan Lineberger, Professor and Head of the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M University, graciously sent QR codes already created and linked for the many Texas Superstar® Plants in the garden, so those will be installed first.

The inaugural code was placed under the 'Possumhaw' Deciduous Holly tree - *Ilex decidua*. A protective coating was applied and after a month of being in the elements, the code still works, making the installation of more codes near plant labels a promising and upcoming venture! QR codes are useful in that when you use your smart phone or other comparable device (with a downloaded QR reader scan app, (such as 'RedLaser') it will view the code and then immediately take you to a website with pictures and more specific information about that plant. This code takes you to the Texas Superstar® website: <http://texassuperstar.com/plants/deciduous/index.html>.

What a wonderful way to combine nature and technology! Since plant labels stay in the garden and only give limited information, we feel this new device will help Galveston County residents and visitors quickly access and mobilize more knowledge about plants they see and enjoy there. The websites we develop will answer many common questions such as, "How much water does it need? How tall does it get? When does it bloom? Does it require full sun? How do I care for it? What are its special characteristics?" Visitors can save the links for future reference at home or in garden centers, follow the stages of the plant each season at the Demonstration Garden and save themselves a lot of time and money by learning the correct location and care for successful plantings at home. We hope the new QR codes will give gardeners the mobile tools they need (and some courage) to try many Earth-Kind®-rated and Texas Superstar® plants and become experts in their own landscape. See <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/> for more Earth-Kind® information.

Don't have a Smartphone? Bring a friend, grandchild or teenager with you and let the garden bring you together. The new Earth-Kind® bed, which demonstrates many conservation-minded principles—specifically showcasing hardy, drought tolerant, easy care plants for our area—will now also save TIME and be even more accessible and user-friendly to Master Gardeners and the public alike. Watch for more exciting and expanded QR code uses this year. So bring your phone and come take a walk in the garden!



Alisa pictured with the first QR code in the garden



A closer look at the QR code.





black gold—worm castings

Worm Wrangling

by Linda Garren
McKillip
MG 2003

About five years ago, I discovered something new moving around in my compost tumbler. Thinking I had an infestation problem, I contacted my friend, Angela Chandler, who is quite wise in the gardening realm. With her help, we identified the interlopers as Red Wigglers which are the worms that are sought after by gardeners for vermiculture or vermi-composting. I was not so sure that I wanted to cultivate worms until I checked on the internet and I realized I had not just one gold mine but two gold mines. Worm castings are one of the best fertilizers available. And, you are able to recycle newspapers and other wastes.

Red Wigglers are expensive by my standards having grown up on a farm where we flipped cow pies to get fishing worms. The more I read I realized the product produced by these worms is called black gold or technically called worm castings. I built myself a worm farm. I bought the biggest plastic storage tub I could easily carry, filled it with shredded newspaper and added worms from my composter. Within a short time, the worms had reproduced and provided me with this wonderful velvety mass of castings. I was so excited that I bought another large tub and moved several handfuls of worms into their new home. Plus I gave away worms to all my friends!

Preparing to go on vacation, I cleaned out the refrigerator and asked my grandson to take the carefully chopped-up, dead and dying produce and divide it between the two bins. When we returned from vacation, I discovered he had put it all in one bin. Those worms drowned from excessive moisture that pooled up in that bin. The other bin was almost dried out. As I was soon to find out, I made a great many mistakes in my initial efforts as a fledgling worm mom. Another problem was the bins I chose were now too heavy to move. I was surprised to find out that worms can double their weight every 45-60 days as long as they are well fed.

The next big thing I learned was to make the worm bin out of two storage boxes placing one inside the other. Angela told me to drill or poke 10-20 small holes in the bottom (of the inside box) to allow the excess moisture to drain into the outside box. Make sure the holes are smooth. You can do this with a hot ice pick or a round file. Had I done this in the beginning, my worms might have survived our vacation.

I already knew to prepare the bin with at least three inches of newspaper torn in strips. And I knew to spray the newspaper with water until it was damp but not soggy. Add worms and something for them to eat and you are in the worm wrangling business! Did you know that worms really love coffee grounds, tea bags and crushed egg shells? But they will take a definite pass on too much citrus and anything from the onion family. Worms are happy to munch most any veggie or fruit scraps from your kitchen, but not meats, grease or oils. You can also toss in paper towels, grass clippings and dead plants. Do not feed them too much at one time; excess scraps can attract other critters which is not a good thing.

I recently learned something new. Angela told me that banana peels have been shown recently to kill out worms in compost bins.

This has been traced to sprays used on the bananas at the port of entry. For this reason, we recommend you use only peels from organic bananas. The treated peels can be composted in a traditional bin, but do not take a chance in a worm bin.

Interestingly, worms prefer the same ambient temperature as we do, mid 60's°F to high 70's°F, but they can tolerate temperature swings between 35°F-100°F. So from that, you can tell they would not be very happy in full sun. I like to keep my bin on our shaded side porch during the summer and under the dining room table in winter. Honestly, there is no odor from a worm bin. My bin has been in our family room for the past 2 years. It is just easier for me to tend it and not forget about it.

I have been dreading the process of harvesting the worm castings. It is too cold for me to go outside, turn the mass onto a plastic sheet and keep pulling the castings away as the worms retreat to the dark center of the pile. Angela has saved the day for me once again. She suggested I add a third bin on top of the other two. I need to make sure the holes in the bottom are large enough for the worms to get through. Then add bedding and food to the new box and the little guys will slowly migrate to their new food source leaving the middle box with only castings. Perfect!

If you prefer to purchase rather than build a home for your worms, there are numerous on-line sources for homes for worms. Just Google worm composting bins for sources to purchase bins and for more ideas on building your own unit. Doing a search on red wigglers for sale will give you options for purchasing your worms.

For information on building your own worm composting bin, try: <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost/easywormbin.htm>
For information on purchasing a bin and worms, try: <http://unclejimswormfarm.com/>



Red Wigglers


Gulf Coast Herb Fair and Dinner with Chef Urs Master Gardeners are invited



*By Mary Lou Kelso
MG 2000*

The Friends of Moody Gardens will be having two Fundraisers—March 5 is the Gulf Coast Herb Fair including a luncheon with speaker Chris Wiesinger (The Bulb Hunter).

On March 6 will be a dinner with Chef Urs at The Viewfinders Room on the top floor of the Moody Gardens Hotel with a limit of 80 tickets to be sold. The proceeds of these fundraisers support the Friends in doing so much for Outreach to PreK, Elementary and Seniors. See the invitations below with details. For further information and/or reservations, contact Mary Lou at mlkelso@sbcglobal.net



**THE FRIENDS OF
MOODY GARDENS**

INVITE YOU TO THE ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Gulf Coast Herb Fair


FEATURED SPEAKER
CHRIS WIESINGER, THE BULB HUNTER
"THE QUEST FOR SOUTHERN HEIRLOOMS"

PLANTING SEEDS OF EDUCATION FOR
PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY, AND SENIORS.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2014
9:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.
THE GARDEN RESTAURANT AT THE
MOODY GARDENS VISITOR CENTER
\$35 PER PERSON

BLESSING OF THE GARDEN: 9:30
LUNCH: 11:30 A.M.
SPEAKER: 12:15 P.M.
HERB FAIR BEFORE AND AFTER

HERB FAIR TO INCLUDE HERB EDUCATION AND INVITED
VENDORS SHOWCASING HERBS, BOOKS, GIFT AND FOOD ITEMS.
FUNDRAISER ALSO INCLUDES A RAFFLE AND SILENT AUCTION.



**THE FRIENDS OF
MOODY GARDENS**

INVITE YOU TO

Dinner with Chef Urs

AT SHEARN'S SEAFOOD AND PRIME STEAKS
*9TH FLOOR OF THE MOODY GARDENS HOTEL

MARCH 6, 2014

5:30 - 6:30 P.M. SOCIAL HOUR AND CASH BAR
6:30 P.M. DINNER FEATURING EXECUTIVE CHEF
URS SCHMID OF THE MOODY GARDENS HOTEL

\$60 PER PERSON
*LIMIT OF 80 GUESTS

SILENT AUCTION AND DOOR PRIZES

MENU

POTATO AND LEEKS SOUP WITH MARJORAM

BABY MIXED GREENS WITH ARUGULA
APPLE CIDER VINAIGRETTE WITH CHIVES, PARSLEY AND TARRAGON

GRILLED SIRLOIN STEAK WITH MAITRE D' HOTEL BUTTER AND
COQUILLE WITH SHRIMP DEJONGE
OVEN ROASTED ROSEMARY POTATOES
ZUCCHINI, TOMATO AND BASIL IN EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

BLUE BELL FRENCH VANILLA ICE CREAM WITH
FLAMBÉED STRAWBERRIES AND MINT

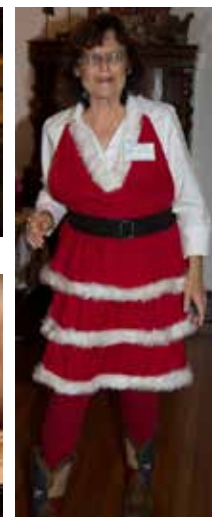


By Mary Lou Kelso
MG 2000

MINUTES

DECEMBER MG MEETINGS

The monthly meeting of the GCMGA met December 10, 2013, at the home of Mikey and Alan Isbell on Galveston Island. Dr. Johnson thanked the members for all their efforts this past year and volunteer hours. Ira Gervais was sworn in as our new President. Jim Edwards, outgoing President, and Wes Ruzek, outgoing Treasurer, were given appreciation gifts for their tenure as officers. Guests were welcomed and a blessing was said before everyone enjoyed a very bountiful dinner.



Master Gardeners at Work

Have you ever wondered what happens to the evaluation forms that participants complete after attending a Master Gardener seminar or workshop? In 2013 there were 64 seminars and 33 other types of educational programs offered by the Galveston County Master Gardeners. For each of these events, Penny Bessire, MG Class of 2012, tabulates and collates the information from the completed evaluation forms, and then enters this data into a program

evaluation report. The report, which may be up to 4 pages in length, summarizes all of the information gathered from the evaluation forms, including numerical ratings as well as comments from participants. Finally, all of the completed program evaluation reports are sent to Dr. Dale Fritz, the Texas A&M AgriLife District 9 Extension Administrator.

Recently, I had an opportunity to work with Sandra Devall, Laura Bellmore and

Dr. Johnson, as they put the finishing touches on the evaluation reports. My job was easy. All I had to do was verify program dates and times and staple cover sheets to the program evaluation forms. The hard part (tabulating, collating, summarizing) had already been done by Penny, Dr. Johnson, and our dedicated staff. Thanks to all for making our Master Gardener program shine!



By Annette Wallfisch
MG Class of 2004

February/March "Things To Do" Gardening Calendar Video



by Jenifer Leonpacher
MG 2010



by Gregory Werth
MG 2012



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

Upcoming Events

Please be sure to register for the programs you want to attend. Accurate attendance counts are needed so that program materials may be on hand for attendees. The following AgriLife Extension Programs are free to the public..

Location: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park

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

For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email GALV3@wt.net

Tuesday Night & Saturday Seminars

Heirloom Tomatoes

Saturday, February 22, 2014

9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

A presentation by Master Gardener Terry Cuclis covering 25+ varieties of heirloom tomatoes that can be grown in Galveston County. Topics include a brief history of tomatoes and their origin, variety characteristics, culture and care of tomatoes.

Honey Bees Around the Garden

Tuesday, February 25, 2013

6:30-8:00 p.m.

Presented by Galveston County Master Gardeners Stewart McAdoo and Robert Marshall. A presentation and discussion on the history, types, social life and hive structure of honey bees. Included in the program will be an overview of residential honey bee keeping.

'Texas Tuff' Landscape Plants - Blooming & Beautiful

Saturday, March 1, 2014

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Galveston County Master Gardener Sandra Devall will present a program on choosing healthy, hearty plants for your landscape that will be ornamental as well as welcoming to bees and other pollinators, birds and butterflies. Program will touch on ways to bring beauty to the garden.

50 Ways to Live a Greener Life

Tuesday, March 4, 2014

6:30-8:00 p.m.

Galveston County Master Gardener Ken Steblein will present a program on what does it mean to live green? Join in on this interactive presentation and learn how you can integrate environmentally positive changes into your lifestyle.

Minimize Tomato Stress Factors to Maximize Yields

Saturday, March 29, 2014

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Do you want to learn how to grow great tomatoes? The third in a series of three programs by Galveston County Master Gardener Ira Gervais on learning all about how to grow great tomatoes here in Galveston County. The program will provide an overview on indentifying various tomato diseases and insect stress factors and how to minimize them to increase yields.




bulletin board



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To volunteer for the **MG Phone Desk** contact Laura Bellmore by e-mail at 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 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.



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 and signed by Dr. William Johnson. Note that fees do not include lodging or food unless specified otherwise.

Educational Tour with Doug Welsh to SOUTH AFRICA

February 15-26, 2014

Join Doug Welsh and explore the lush gardens of Johannesburg, South Africa's stunning national parks and the gorgeous flora of Cape Town. In addition, you'll discover the dramatic landscape of the Cape of Good Hope, sip wines in South Africa's premier wine region, and stay in the Dutch colonial town of Stellenbosch. Your journey will culminate at the Bakubung Bush Lodge where you'll ride into the bush in an open safari vehicle with Swazi trackers and African rangers for an intimate viewing of South Africa's lions, leopards, rhinos and elephants.

For more information, call Earthbound Expeditions at 800-723-8454, email at info@earthboundexpeditions.com, or visit <http://www.earthboundexpeditions.com/february-2014-south-africa-with-doug-welsh>

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 or MG Bobbie Ivey at 713-748-8564 or email at 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)! 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

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 to find out the schedule and join her team.



THE PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The Photography Group meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:30 pm at the Extension Office at Carbide Park. This photography group is open to all Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists for fun, learning and practice of photography. Pictures are submitted to the MG/MN database for use in publications and lectures.



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



VOLUNTEER HOURS LOGS

To report volunteer hours send your log sheets to mghours@wt.net



the last word . . .

HOW TO CARE FOR PLANTS DAMAGED BY FREEZE

(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

When did our landscapes move North? Are we not situated on the balmy Gulf Coast of Texas? Should our USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map rating be lowered?

Temperatures dipped low enough and for long enough to exact a toll on cold-sensitive landscape plants in Galveston County, as well as throughout much of Texas.

What's a gardener to do? First, do not panic at the miserable appearance of cold-sensitive plants just after a hard freeze.

Several factors will influence the extent of cold injury suffered by ornamentals and even certain types of fruit, especially citrus. Such factors include variety—some may be more cold tolerant than others—and age (recent plantings that are not well-established are more susceptible to freeze injury). A very important factor is the general health of a plant.

However, homeowners can take steps now to help reduce the occurrence of additional injuries to ornamental and fruit plants resulting from the latest cold snap. These activities include the following:

- Keep plants well-watered. Watering is an extremely important plant-saving practice for winter.

It is very important that plants—those in containers, as well as in the soil—be provided adequate moisture throughout the winter season.

The wind in the winter, like the sun in the summer, will dry soils. Be especially sure that soils are well-watered if another cold snap appears to be forthcoming to prevent plant roots from drying out.

- Even though woody plants may appear to be in poor condition, do not do any pruning until late winter or early spring—this applies to all citrus and ornamentals, including palm trees.

Heavy pruning now can stimulate new growth which could easily be burned back if another cold snap occurs. Also, it is easier to prune and shape ornamentals after the full extent of damage is known.

- Proper fertilization is a key to winter hardiness for many perennial landscape plants. Our local soils are usually low in nitrogen and potassium, the elements plants use to boost their cold protection defense during winter.

Even if it's been a while since you fertilized your perennial landscape plants, do not start fertilizing cold-stressed plants until they have resumed active growth in the spring.

The use of fertilizer now may stimulate new growth which is very susceptible to cold injury. Also, fertilizer salts may cause further injury to stressed root systems.

- Damage to most citrus fruit occurs when temperatures fall below 28 degrees for at least four hours.

Grapefruits are the most cold-hardy citrus fruit because of their thick skins, followed by oranges, mandarin types, lemons and limes.

Large and thick-skinned fruit are more cold tolerant than small, thin-skinned fruit. When fruit freezes, it can still be used for juice if quickly harvested.

- Do not be in a hurry to prune plants such as hibiscus, pentas, lantana and plumbago. They can be cleaned up a little if they look unsightly or the neighborhood association sends a letter, but don't

cut these plants all the way back unless you're willing to give up a security layer for the plant. Leave some of the damaged material intact.

Be patient and don't remove dead leaves and twigs of bananas, umbrella plants, etc. until at least mid-March. Should yet another cold snap occur, the dead foliage can help protect the rest of the plant from cold temperature damages and can aid the plant in a quicker recovery.

- Plants with thick, fleshy roots like cannas, firespike, four o'clocks and gingers can be cut all the way to the ground, and they will regrow next spring. Even after severe freezes, most plants like bougainvillea and hibiscus come back from the roots, so don't give up on them.

- Most cool-season vegetables fared well during the cold snap, with broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, mustard, onions, and turnip, coming through fine. The cold temperatures can make these cool season vegetables taste even better.

Unless they were protected, warm season vegetables bit the dust, and it's time to remove them from the garden.

- Some plants, of course, won't stand any freezing weather regardless of how many toughening techniques you employ. That's one of the reasons for using only thoroughly hardy plants in the basic framework of your landscape (such as for shade trees, and screening and foundation plantings).

Use the less hardy, more tender plants (i.e., flowering annuals, bougainvillea, hibiscus, etc.) as filler to add interest to entryways, flower beds or borders.

The full extent of injury to many plants may not become apparent until summer.

It will be of utmost importance that cold-stressed plants also be provided good care throughout the 2014 growing season to safely achieve a full recovery.



Temperatures dipped low enough and for long enough to exact a toll on cold-sensitive landscape plants in Galveston County, as well as throughout much of Texas.

2014 MGA MONTHLY MEETINGS

January 20, 2014

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

February 11, 2014

Tish Reustle - Activity at Demo Gardens
6:30 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

March 11, 2014

Henry Harrison III and Tim Jahnke
Garden Tool Maintenance
6:30 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

April 8, 2014

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

May 13, 2014

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

June 10, 2014

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

July 8, 2014

Heather McKnight, League City Arborist
7:00 pm Extension Office
Greenhouses
Carbide Park - La Marque

August, 2014

Moody Gardens- Date TBA
Galveston Island
Venues from 9:30 am, Meal @ 5:45 pm

September 9, 2014

TBA

October 14, 2014

Mike & Leslie Mize - Backyard Meeting
5:30 pm - 1504 7th Street
League City

November 11, 2014

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

December 9, 2014

Holiday Meeting - Mikey and Allen Isbell
6:30 pm - 1715 - 35th Street
Galveston Island



*By Judy Anderson
MG 2012*

GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

Upcoming Master Gardener Programs

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

Join Master Gardener Tish Reustle as she gives an update of the activity in the "Back Forty" of the Demo Gardener. The Demo Garden is constantly evolving and it is important to take time to hear what is going on in the garden. The parking has been expanded, the greenhouse continues with construction, a sitting bench has been added to the orchard, the herb bed has been rebuilt and replanted. Tish will be talking about what is happening with the Serenity Garden, the Drought Tolerant Garden, the Texas trees, and other changes. You are invited to a desert social before the presentation; bring a favorite sweet to share. Coffee and tea will be provided.

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

Mark your calendar for this special evening presented by Henry Harrison III and Tim Jahnke. With spring gardening just around the corner, it is important to get our tools ready for "dirt".

Henry and Tim will be sharing good maintenance tips for all gardening tools. Don't miss this much needed program, "Garden Tool Maintenance"! Before the presentation, you are invited to a pot luck dinner. Bring a dish to share; beverages will be provided.

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

Once again Karen and Tom Morris will be hosting the Galveston County Master Gardeners at their home on the Houston Ship Channel. The evening offers a view of the boat traffic on the intercoastal waterway, with an opportunity to stroll through a landscape that features vegetables, and an abundant orchard. There is plenty of parking, but care must be taken to leave the narrow street free for neighbors and emergency vehicles. Directions to the home will be sent by email. Karen and Tom extend an invitation to MG's to bring a pot luck and join them for "dinner on the patio".

FEEDBACK



We Want Your Feedback

We would love to hear from you. Send us your comments or suggestions for future articles, or just let us know how you are using our newsletter. To make sending feedback easy, just click on the button with your response

