

Gulf Coast Gardening

WRITTEN BY GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS IN COOPERATION
WITH THE GALVESTON COUNTY OFFICE OF TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

Issue 195 - March April 2015

Cymbidium Orchid

Do your plants suffer from excess TLC?



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Japanese Beetle!

*If you know what's good for you
Off the eggplants NOW
(Unknown)*

*A ladybug sits
on my question mark. Is she
asking or answering?
(Unknown)*

*Varmints are coming
Caterpillars, inch-worms, slugs
There goes my garden
(AnneM's haiku)*

*Something I have learned
Gardening in heavy rain
Is not any fun
(Unknown)*



*By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008*

A few haikus conjuring gardening imagery to kick off the spring!

It's been an unusually dreary, gray winter this year, even for our Texas Gulf Coast region. So few sunny days, you can almost count them on several fingers. I know I am past ready for the sun to reappear. Now that March has arrived, most of us are cleaning up garden debris, pruning, trimming and getting ready to plant vegetables or change out plants for the coming growing season. We had a successful fruit tree sale in February. If you purchased something after the sale, hopefully you've gotten your new plants in the ground and are not like me who purchases plants and then has no place for them unless Ken will build or help me build a new raised bed. My only argument is I could have worse additions.

Speaking of spring gardening, our newsletter this month features many topical and education articles for this time of year. One of our Q&As this month (page 4) describes the importance of raised beds and soil amendments to make your plantings successful in our sometimes challenging growing area. Learn about Sesbania in the Q&A on page 5. Is it a weed, invasive or native plant? Are you a gardener who likes to expend as little energy as possible or are you a helicopter gardener always hovering over your plants? Read about Donna Ward's success doing virtually nothing on page 6. If you are replacing, expanding or just looking for new plants for your garden, Kaye Corey's article on page 7 provides ideas for plants that are resilient and really perform well in Texas.

The Best Shots feature this issue (pages 8-11) is on one of my absolute favorite topics, our Asian Demonstration Garden and its majestic bamboo. I hear bad comments about bamboo occasionally; however, if you choose correctly it's stunning. It makes a great hedge, a wind-break, adds movement to your landscape and is green year-round. Read about the types of bamboo in this amazing garden, along with the symbolism of the other plants and the specific hardscape elements in this peaceful place. This minimalist garden began the improvements at the north end of the garden which now includes a demonstration of trees for our area, the Earth-Kind/WaterSmart garden and a new butterfly garden. I hear the mason bee house is up and is ready for the bees to move in. I can't wait to see it. If you'd like to work in the demonstration garden but vegetables and raised beds aren't your thing, visit with Tish Reustle and Alisa Rasmussen any Thursday. They can always use some assistance in the north end of the garden.

Pat Forke gives us tips for what we need to know when choosing plants—don't just buy them—know before you purchase what they need for success in your landscape, page 12. Donna Ward, in a second article, provides us an education on actions to prepare our beds, fertilizing, pruning or trimming our flowering trees and shrubs at this time of year (page 14). Jan Brick reminds us spring is the perfect time to plant mint and highlights some unusual mints you might enjoy in your gardens (page 15).

Please plant milkweed for the Monarchs and read about their current status on page 13. Enjoy meeting Master Gardener Monica Martens and learning about how her love of gardening came to be on page 16. Activities in Carbine Park continue in spite of recent bad weather. Many thanks to our Master Gardeners who continue to inspire with their work and enthusiasm in the Demonstration Garden, see page 17 to read what's been going on there. Sandra Gervais provides some fresh recipes for us on page 18. Dr. Johnson educates us on deciphering the essentials of plant tags (page 23). Don't forget to check out the Bulletin Board (page 22) for updated volunteer needs and the Gardening Calendar Video (page 21).

I've been asked for the links to the Demonstration Garden's Davis weather station and to our home weather station so MGs can put a shortcut on their computers or their phones. Below are both links. You can use the "Map" feature to find other close-by Davis weather stations or Davis weather stations around town or wherever you might be traveling to see what's happening weather-wise. Map and Summary are clickable tabs on the upper right side of the page when you open the link. "Summary" tab will give you more data and history. If you have questions send me a note.

Demonstration Garden: <http://www.weatherlink.com/user/gcmga>

Goodwin's weather station: <http://www.weatherlink.com/user/kgoodwin>

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Cymbidium orchid (Orchidaceae)
Photo by Donna Ward

Galveston County Master Gardeners are on Facebook with information about upcoming programs, Dr. Johnson's weekly column and more. Like us on Facebook and don't forget to opt to receive notifications. Share with others!



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

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By Sandra Devall
MG 1998

ask a master gardener

Q&A

Hot Line Topics - Raise Your Beds



By Barbara Markey
MG 2013

Question: We are new to gardens in this area. Are there special requirements for this soil?

Galveston County has two weather conditions that require special planting precautions. They are drought and deluges. So we counter them with raised beds and amended soil. Raised beds and amended soil complement each other holding the moisture and adding necessary nutrition around the plant and keeping the plants from drowning and rotting. These are two important steps in setting up a new bed that we call . . . “Don’t put ten dollar plants in ten cents worth of soil”.

Raise Your Beds - Raised beds give an advantage to vegetable gardeners, making it easier to control weeds, but in Galveston County, they are a necessity for landscaping beds. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service recommends 8-12 inches above the lawn for raised beds.

Adding edging to a raised bed adds beauty to a landscape as well as keeps the soil in and the weeds out. Edging adds dimension to your landscape. Use stones, landscape timbers, bricks, metal edging or permanent cement curbing as edging. Each has its own advantage, so it just depends on your taste. Initial planting does not need to be delayed because of edging, it can always be added later, but it is difficult to raise a bed or amend the soil enough to be successful after planting.

Amend Your Soil - Good soil produces good plants! I love to hold a handful of good soil. When I hold a fistful of that soil and then open my hand, it holds together, then easily separates when I pat it with my other hand. Our native soil in Galveston County is sand on the coastal areas and inland soil is predominantly clay.

Prepare your Bed - Use a compost-enriched soil—equal amounts of sand, clay and organic matter. If you are doing a complete landscaping project and need a lot of soil, you might want to price a truck load from some of the soil lots in the area or compare their prices with purchasing individual bags at hardware or feed stores. When buying individual bags, you will only need to buy the two ingredients you are lacking in your native soil. For example, if you

have clay soil, buy sand (not sandbox sand) and organic matter. For organic matter, you can buy bagged peat, use your own peat from composting or use well-composted manure.

Place 6-8 layers of newspaper into the area and then layer on the amended soil. This will retard some of the weed invasions and the newsletter adds compost to the bed for the next season.

If you choose to buy premixed soil, be sure to specify landscaping soil, not potting soil.

Money-Savers Make Their Own Planting Soil.

After removing all grass, weeds and other vegetation from the site, dig out 6-8 inches of soil and put it in a wheelbarrow. Use your shovel (and your hands) to mix together equal amounts of native soil, organic material and sand. Then add newspaper followed by amended soil.

Each year, plan to improve the quality of your bed by adding additional layers of leaves and compost, as well as other organic material.

Reference: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides a brochure entitled, Building a Raised Bed Garden., EHT-078.

“Take thy plastic spade, it is thy pencil; take thy seeds, thy plants, they are thy colors.” William Mason, The English Garden, 1782

Tips to remember:

- Remove all weeds and vegetation from location
- Choose site with at least 8 hours sun for full sun plants
- Beds no wider than 4 feet
- Plan your water source in design phase - close to water faucet; soaker hoses are very easy and efficient.
- Water-smart gardeners add a graveled area to the back of the bed about 12 inches wide with gravel and metal edging and make sure some of the rainwater has a path through this area which adds a water source for the plants.



Photo by PJ Burkett



By Pat Forke
MG 2010

Weed I.D.

Question: I have noticed a rather large shrub growing wild with seed pods. Is this plant poisonous?

Depending on whom you might ask, this weed named *Sesbania* is a toxic, invasive plant or an interesting, native plant with beautiful blooms and interesting seed pods and leaflets.

Sesbania can be seen growing in East and South Texas and along the coast to Florida. This sometimes invasive and toxic weed often extends inland along waterways. *Sesbania* can be found in wet areas, usually in tight soil, and often grows in shallow water. In drier areas, *sesbania* can be found in low sandy areas that are subject to flooding.

Sesbania drummondii is also known as rattlebush, rattlebox, winged sennabeen, and poison bean. It is a medium-sized perennial shrub in the legume family Fabaceae. These shrubs will grow as tall as nine feet. The branches are thin, widely spreading and mostly branched in the upper portions. These plants flower from May to October with orange-yellow pea-like flowers occurring in a drooping raceme or cluster on a long stem. They are often found with a red lining. The resulting seed pods remain attached until the plant dies back to ground level for winter.

Sesbania exaltata, commonly known as Hemp Sesbania, coffeebean or bigpod, is a smaller plant with thicker stems. The cotyledon blades are oblong, thick and smooth, with a mid-vein that is indistinct near the base of the upper surface but distinct on the lower surface. The petioles are short and flat with smooth ridges across the upper surface. The leaves alternate with the first leaf being simple. All additional leaves are arranged feather-like with 6-8 or more leaflets. In a mature plant, the leaves may be as long as 12 inches and each leaf may have from 20-70 leaflets. The individual leaflets have very short, minute stalks. *Sesbania exaltata* is a robust annual growing to four feet. The flowers occur in the axils of the leaves, will grow to a length of approximately 4 inches and are yellow and often streaked or spotted with purple. The fruit is a dry, smooth, linear pod approximately 4 inches long with 30-40 seeds.

Sesbania vesicaria, commonly known as bag-pod or bladderpod, is also a member of the legume family. This variety can grow up to 6 to 10 feet tall. The leaves consist of 20 to 40 alternate leaflets. Drooping spikes of yellow to coral colored flowers appear in the late summer. The beaked pods consist of two membranes, the outer one thick and the inner one papery. Each holds two or three seeds. The pods persist on the plant long after the leaves have fallen. The kidney-shaped seeds have a prominent hilum, or eye.

The *Sesbania* seed pod contains a concentration of sesbaimide which is a highly toxic poison. Because the fresh green plants are foul-tasting, animals pastured with the plant during the growing season are seldom poisoned. However naïve ruminants, particularly the cud-chewing animals such as goats and cattle, are often poisoned when they are introduced to the dried plants in the fall and winter when they consume the mature dry seedpods and seeds. The newly mature seeds are more toxic than those that have weathered on the plant. The seed

of *Sesbania vesicaria* seem to be more toxic than those of *Sesbania drummondii*.

Signs of poisoning usually occur within one or two days after consumption and can include: depression, diarrhea, weakness, rapid heart rate, labored breathing, and death. Death quickly follows the onset of clinical signs, which in many cases go unobserved. Avoid placing hungry, naïve ruminants in pastures containing plants with mature seedpods. Infestations can be eliminated by mowing and prevented by good range management practices as these plants are poor competitors.



Sesbania drummondii Mature Plant



Sesbania exaltata hemp



Sesbania Young Plant



Sesbania vesicaria

Photos by Herman Auer



NOT A TERMINAL CONDITION

Benign Neglect

By Donna J. Ward

MG 1996

Did you know that many plants die from too much attention? We tend to over-water, over-feed, and in general just give our plants too much TLC. I am a practioner of the 'Do As Little As Possible, But Expect Spectacular Results School of Gardening.' And—WOW—did it ever work for me!!! About ten years ago, my friend Lola Thomas (MG, 1998) presented me with a pot of cymbidium orchids (Orchidaceae). They were pseudo-bulbs that she had divided from her own. Quite honestly, I had no desire to raise orchids, so I placed the pot in a seldom seen corner of my yard—'Outta sight—outta mind.' It only got water when it rained, and fertilizer—You gotta be kidding! Even after Hurricane Ike slammed the pot up against the fence and broke it, I still was not inclined to pay it any mind. Maybe my conscience caught up with me, as in the spring of 2013, I had a change of heart. Finally it was going to get some attention. I took it out of the miniscule amount of dirt that was left in the broken pot, and was surprised to see that some of the pseudo-bulbs seemed to be showing some probable although diminutive signs of life. Many of them were totally desiccated, but a few seemed firm, and I sensed the likelihood of some green growth at a future date.

With a sharp knife, I trimmed away the dried portions down into firm flesh. Those pieces possessing even the most infinitesimal suggestion of life were left to callus over for a few days. I put them into a large pot of plain, nothing special potting soil, watered them well and placed the pot under a crape myrtle, along with a few potted low-maintenance plants. It did get a miniscule amount of attention because of its proximity to other plants, and soon began to produce long strappy leaves similar to daylilies.

One early December morning in 2014, I was shocked to see what looked to be a bloom spike poking out of the soil. "Wow—maybe I better do some research—Google, here I come." There appeared to be more information than I ever wanted to know, and it seemed to be a prerequisite that the bloom stalks be staked. At this point I had moved the pot into the greenhouse as the squirrels in my yard view bloom buds as a culinary delicacy. Still a student of the 'Do As Little As Possible School.....' I decided staking wasn't going to happen. Well, the bloom stalks just kept coming—eight in all, and they soon soared to a smidgen over two feet tall, and full of tightly closed buds. At the base of each bud stem there appeared a small drop of clear nectar, and ants apparently living in the soil were harvesting the sweet droplets, as they were scurrying up and down along each bloom stalk—much to the delight of the anoles who inhabit the greenhouse during the winter months.

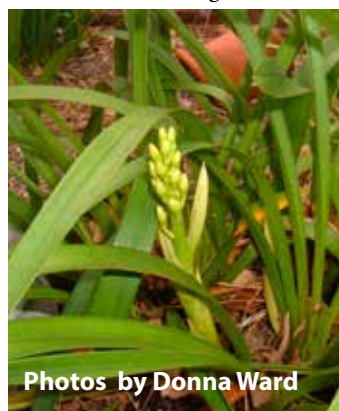
Finally in mid-January the first blossom opened; it was a soft, very pale yellow, and over a period of about four weeks they all opened. I counted the blossoms and then counted a second and a third time to be sure I was right. There were a full one hundred and thirty blossoms on eight very sturdy, upright stalks! It's a well-known fact that when a plant is stressed, and this plant was stressed to the utmost, Mother Nature steps in and sees to its survival in order to perpetuate the species.

So, my advice would be - quit babying your plants and turning them into wimps. Benign neglect is undoubtedly the answer on some occasions.

P.S. Yesterday, I noticed a ninth bloom stalk! It's about six inches tall and already showing tightly closed buds. You might want to consider joining the 'Do As Little As Possible, But Expect Spectacular Results School of Gardening.' Works for me.....



Unnamed Beauty



Photos by Donna Ward



Count Them 8 Bloom Spikes



First to Open

A Bloom Spike

Up Close - Full Bloom

SUPER-PERFORMING PLANTS

plants that are Texas Tuff

I was in a large chain nursery admiring a beautiful display of red geraniums when I asked an employee where they had obtained such pretty plants. He very proudly stated the shipment had come in from Canada. Really? We wonder why people often say "I'm not a gardener, all I do is kill plants."

We spend tons of money on replacement plants that are never going to live in our coastal Zone 9 environment. Let's stop fighting Mother Nature and garden smart with plants adapted and grown for our Gulf Coast climate, soils, and rainfall.

Plants developed through Texas AgriLife Research and the Texas Superstar program are Texas Tuff plants. They must be super-performing plants under Texas growing conditions. Their quality and reliability reflect several years of extensive field trials. During field trials, the plants receive minimal soil preparation, reasonable levels of water and no pesticides. Every effort is made to ensure that developed plants will perform well for Texas consumers. Cultural information is provided to give the gardener guidance regarding proper plant care.

But what about Texas Natives? Aren't they the tried and true plants for our area? Coastal native plants, were here before our forefathers. The Texas settlers found marsh plants, prairie grasses, wildflowers, with some coastal live oaks—not the landscapes of today. Natives make wonderful habitats for wildlife, birds and butterflies. They are root hardy and grow well in our soils. Natives coupled with Texas Tuff Superstars are our contemporary gardens and habitats of today.

Lantana of the Vervain family Verbenaceae, has been improved from the tall, lanky, seed bearing orange and yellow native. The new varieties are dwarf, with a spreading bushy habit, and free-flowering large blooms. The best improvement made to these plants in my opinion is sterilization. The new variety named 'New Gold' blooms profusely but seldom forms berries which once had to drop or be removed before more blooms would be produced. Lantana never had a lovely fragrant aroma and sorry to say, it still doesn't. But, 'New Gold' Superstar is an outstanding garden addition.

Turks Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*) is a native to south Texas. It is a drought tolerant and root hardy perennial in most of Texas. This large shrub with red turban-like flowers was a highlight in my mother's garden. Today, the flowers are red to pink to white with the cultivar 'Fiesta' having variegated leaves of yellow and white. I grow mine in the shade under my fig tree. It blooms nicely adding color to an otherwise empty area of my garden.

Plumbago (*Plumbago auriculata*), is a perennial with profuse blue flowers which thrives in our hot summers. It tends to ramble and likes to be pruned for shape and reblooming. The white variety (*Plumbago zeylanica*) is a focal point in my all white garden. I have companions of Dwarf 'Alba' white Mexican Petunia (*Ruellia brittoniana*), "Baby's Breath" Euphorbias (*Euphorbia hypericifolia*), the fragrant white Gardenia 'Daisy' (*Gardenia jasminoides*), and White Salvia Coccinea (*Salvia coccinea*). I added texture and movement to this bed with variegated Aztec grass and Feather grass.

Roses to Love

The Belinda's Dream Rose is not only a Texas Superstar, but it has also received the prestigious Earth-Kind designation. It is a beautifully shaped pink continual blooming rose. This rose is almost a perfect plant. It grows in my rose garden with red and pink Knock Out roses. The Knock Out roses were released to the public in 2000 by the Conard-Pyle Company in Pennsylvania. They are very low maintenance while providing continual blooms almost year round in our area. They can be pruned like hedges and just keep right on blooming. When you add the newer "Drift" rose (2008) to the spectrum of color and low maintenance, you feel like a truly successful rosarian.

The TexasSuperstars website (<http://www.texassuperstar.com/plants/>) will provide you with an amazing wealth of Texas Gardening information put forth by Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service and the Texas Superstar program. This website will also help find local retailers, Texas tough plants, and general growing tips. Gardening smart simply means doing our homework, to produce the most beautiful, enjoyable gardens with the least amount of effort and using plants that have the best chance of success.



By Kaye Corey
MG 2001



GCMG Digital Library
Malvaviscus arboreus var
drummondii 'Pam Puryear'



Photo by MG Mona Ray
Gardenia 'Daisy'



Photo by MG Herman Auer
Belinda's Dream Rose



Photo by MG Sandra Devall - Lantana 'New Gold'

MG Best Shots



Buddah's Belly Bamboo



Buddah's Belly Bamboo



Punting Pole Bamboo



Punting Pole Bamboo



Fernleaf Bamboo



Fernleaf Bamboo

...and Narrative

OUR ASIAN DEMONSTRATION GARDEN AND ITS BAMBOO



By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008

This inspiring and serene garden was a project designed and developed by four 2008 Master Gardeners (Carine Grojean, Tish Reustle, Jan Hart and myself) who became friends during their 2008 Galveston County Master Gardening Intern Course. Soon after we completed the formal training course in April 2008, we began plans for this garden and requested permission to locate it in a new area north of the current demonstration garden that was just becoming available for new projects. It took about a year and a half to finalize the design of the garden, the initial plant and hardscape materials and obtain approval from our Extension Agent and funding from our MG Association to begin. The Asian Garden Team made many presentations using a model that one of the members built so that it was easier to visualize the future garden. The Asian Garden Team was extremely fortunate that one of the four team members, Carine, had extensive knowledge of Asian themed gardens and had taken training courses in various parts of the World in this “minimalist” approach to garden design and symbolism. In addition to the initial four team members, another talented member of the 2008 class, Karen Lehr, worked with the Asian Garden Team to develop and draw a formal landscape plan for the garden. By the time work began in March 2010, one of the original members had retired to the hill country of Texas so the remaining three began the garden. In June 2011, the garden was far enough along to invite GCMGs to our “grand opening” where the Asian Garden Team provided an Asian themed lunch to celebrate how far we had come.

When you visit this garden you will feel the peace, simplicity and beauty of this elegant space. The garden features key design concepts and symbolism found in Asian type gardens that recreate a landscape of graceful form and harmony to create a tranquil place for reflection and enjoyment. The natural elements of water, rock and plants have been used to help the observer absorb the tranquility in this space or to just enjoy, dream, think or relax. Some of the symbolism you’ll see in the garden includes water (represents life), rocks (imitate mountains), a gravel river of rock that flows without geometric forms or lines, flat concrete slabs to signify a bridge and a gravel path with stepping stones. Much interest in the garden is created using small details like foliage texture and color rather than a lot of flowers. Crape Myrtles, Montrose Vitex, bottlebrush, sweet almond verbena, hibiscus, muhly grass, cannas, sea oats and various grasses are some of the plants that surround the garden’s exterior. Inside the garden, a black Japanese pine is a focal point along with a small stone basin water feature. Other plantings inside the garden include a Tropic Snow Peach tree, more variegated grasses, azalea, camellia, curculigo, iris, Texas allium, ground covers and succulents.

The Asian Garden Team could not have completed the garden without the assistance of other energetic GCMGs including Jim Edwards, Wes Ruzek, Clyde Holt, Dick Carter, Tom Fountain, Joe Fisher, Bill Verm, Jim Waligora, Kenneth Deslattes, Wayne Elliott, Bill Jenke, John Bridjmohan, Willie David, Julie Cartmill, Ira Gervais, Alisa Rasmussen, Chris Anastas, Jerry Wayne and Dr. William Johnson. Special thanks to Clyde Holt who donated beautiful bonsai plants which are prominently featured near our contemplation bench, and also to Anna and Lester Wygrys who donated the striking unusual boulder rocks. Team member Tish Reustle designed and built the iron bell feature near the entrance to the garden. Please come visit and enjoy this unique space!

By selecting plants that thrive in our region, the garden survived through hard freezes in 2010 - 2014 and a record drought in 2011 with few losses of plant materials.

We hope our Asian Demonstration Garden educates our visitors and provides ideas on how to design and build such a peaceful place in their own landscape by using unusual plants and hardscape materials that are simple and minimalist and, of course, suited to our region.

Symbolism of Bamboo: Bamboo is a symbol for longevity because of its durability, strength, flexibility and resilience. It survives in the harshest conditions, and seems to endure through all the brutalities mother nature can dish out—still standing tall, and staying green year-round. Its flexibility and adaptability are a lesson to us all that the secret of a long happy life is to go with the flow.

BAMBOO: Our garden features eight different species and cultivars of bamboo. Seven are clumping bamboo and one is a running bamboo.

Running bamboo is aggressive, spreading by sending out underground rhizomes (root-like underground stems). These bamboos are more cold hardy. The rhizomes of running bamboos run underground at a shallow depth and spread to densely fill up an area of land. The rhizomes can extend some distance underground from the standing culms before they break above ground. They can be controlled by rhizome barriers and proper trimming of their rhizomes at least once per year.

Clumping bamboo is non-invasive and slowly expands in circumference each year in a more controlled manner around its clump. Clumping bamboos are more tropical or sub-tropical. Bamboo can be used as windbreaks, privacy screens, for making furniture and accessories, weaving, fabrics and flooring.

Cultivation tips: Bamboos are tropical and need protection from harsh winter winds and cold temperatures. Water regularly. If leaves curl between waterings, more water is needed. Once established, fertilize lightly with a high nitrogen fertilizer (like one used for lawns) once spring, summer and fall. Mulch the base area, especially in winter. Remove old/dead culms at soil level once a year.

The bamboo in our Galveston County Asian Demonstration Garden are native to China, Japan or Taiwan and are from the FAMILY: Poaceae (grass Family) and GENUS: *Bambusa*. All need full sun.



Gracilis Bamboo



Gracilis Bamboo



Tropical Blue Bamboo



Tropical Blue Bamboo



Giant Timber Bamboo



Giant Timber Bamboo

BUDDAH'S BELLY BAMBOO (*Bambusa tuldooides* cv. 'Ventricosa Kimmei')

Named for its culms' internode bulges that look like "pot bellies" that form in poor soil or stressed conditions. Under normal conditions canes range from green-yellow to green in color. When potted or lacking nutrients becomes a dwarf. Max height: 55 feet, Minimum temperature: 15 degrees F. Exposure: Full Sun. CLUMPING - Non-invasive

PUNTING POLE BAMBOO (*Bambusa tuldooides* cv. 'Punting Pole')

Fast growing, produces thick, rigid stems (2 inches across base). Makes a dense tall screen and is excellent for privacy or single specimen for an Asian garden. Can also be used as a windbreak. This bamboo is deer resistant and is considered a water-wise plant. The culm wood is strong and is used for weaving and construction. Originally used as punting poles to move boats in China. Canes grow in a tight clump and are striped. This is a very tall and slender bamboo. It can be controlled to 15-20 feet or reach 40-55 feet. Minimum temperature: 15 degrees F. Exposure: Full Sun. CLUMPING - Non-invasive.

FERNLEAF BAMBOO (*Bambusa multiplex*)

Also known as Hedge Bamboo growing 8 to 10 feet. Culms are ½ inch in diameter. Canes are upright and green with culms every 4 to 6 inches. Tufts of small stems emerge on the culms bearing densely packed, small green leaves. Minimum temperature: 6 degrees F. at zero degrees plants will defoliate and canes will die to the ground. Exposure: Full Sun. CLUMPING - Non-invasive. Makes a nice deer resistant hedge.

GRACILIS BAMBOO (*Bambusa textilis gracilis*)

This is a visually stunning bamboo. Grows about 30 feet tall with canes up to 1.5 inches in diameter. Also known as Graceful Bamboo or Slender Weavers bamboo. Good choice for narrow spaces or smaller yards. Exposure: Full sun. CLUMPING - Non-invasive. Minimum temperature: 18 degrees F. Textilis refers to the use of the species in weaving.

TROPICAL BLUE BAMBOO (*Bambusa chungii*)

This is a stunning ornamental specimen with a distinctive waxy powder-like, blue-white, "bloom" coloration on the stems and on new green canes. In bright light the canes look greenish-white, in lower light at dawn and dusk or in shade the appearance is a beautiful, soft, bluish-white. This is a fast grower and not as tight a clumper as other clumping bamboos. Give it more space in your garden. Tropical Blue Chungii is notoriously expensive because it is labor intensive and difficult to propagate. Grows to 20-30 feet. Minimum temperature: 21 degrees F. Exposure: Full Sun. CLUMPING - Non-invasive. Can be used to create an impressive, large hedge. This should be a centerpiece of your landscape.

The Tropical Blue specimen in our Galveston County Asian Demonstration garden was donated by the original 3 Asian Garden team members from the 2008 Master Gardening class.

GIANT TIMBER BAMBOO (*Bambusa oldhamii*)

Also known as Oldham's Bamboo; originates from Taiwan. This is one of the best bamboos for large, dense screens and windbreaks, with densely foliated, erect clumps. Culm may be covered with a whitish-gray powder. A large and imposing bamboo. Can be found throughout the Disney parks. Grows 25-45 feet tall, culms are 4 inches in diameter. Minimum Temperature: 21 degrees F. Exposure: Full sun. CLUMPING - Non-invasive. Needs careful placement in your landscape as this is a large dense bamboo. Deer resistant and considered a water-wise plant.

ALPHONSE KARR BAMBOO (*Bambusa multiplex*)

The culms of Alphonse Karr are golden with random green stripes of varying width. The golden color of the culm takes on a magenta cast when exposed to bright sunlight. Alphonse Karr grows in very tight cluster of canes and is an excellent choice for a hedge or privacy screen. Grows to 30 feet with 1.5 inch culms. Minimum temperature: 20 degrees F. Exposure: Full Sun. CLUMPING - Non-invasive. Can be used as a privacy screen or hedge.

VARIEGATED CHINESE TEMPLE BAMBOO (*Sinobambusa tootsik* cv. 'Albostriata')

This is an aggressive running bamboo with tufted clusters of yellowish white striped leaves on straight slender erect culms. This is the only running bamboo in our Galveston Country Asian Demonstration Garden. Grows 15-20 feet tall with 1-inch diameter culms. Minimum temperature: 10 degrees F. Exposure: Full sun. RUNNING - INVASIVE if not controlled. This is a good hedge or accent bamboo.



Alphonse Karr Bamboo



Alphonse Karr Bamboo



Variegated Chinese Temple



Variegated Chinese Temple



By Pat Forke
MG 2010

before you get the shovel out - do a little research

"Live and Let Die"

Live and Let Die" is more than James Bond's seventh movie and a song written by Paul McCartney. It is a philosophy shared by some gardeners.

Unfortunately, some gardeners think they can plant a plant wherever they think that plant will look best without regard to the plant's needs or the characteristics of the location. If you enjoy impulse shopping at the nursery and finding a beautiful plant for that vacant spot in your landscape without any thought to the needs of the plant, you might get to do that same exercise over and over again, year after year.

Impulse shopping is not a forbidden exercise but, before you get the shovel out, stop and do a little research. It is important if you want that plant to survive and thrive that you match the plant to the place. It is always great fun to find a beautiful plant at the nursery or plant sale and carry it home to plant in your garden. This is one of those getting-the-horse-before-the-cart scenarios that we are all guilty of. Ideally you should first identify the location(s) in your garden that needs enhancing, determine characteristics of that location, research plants that would thrive in that type of location and then head to the nursery with your list of possibilities in hand.

As they say, location, location, location. Of course, you need to be aware of what zone you are in and the condition of your soil. The source listed in this article (see colored inset) will allow you to input your zip code and determine what the zone is for your location. You certainly can plant plants that will freeze in your zone but, if you want them to survive, your plants will need protection when the temperature drops. Your local Extension Office can supply the information you need for having your soil tested. Remember you will need to test your soil.

Analyzing your location can then be divided primarily into three sections: light, water and growing space. How much sun is available in the different areas of your landscape? Do not forget to factor in the amount of sunlight at different times of the year as the earth shifts. Also consider nearby buildings and trees. How are they affecting the distribution of the sunlight on your property? Know what side of the house you will be adding plants. Keep in mind the south side will get the most sun and the north the least amount as well as often being the coldest, most windy side. West will get the hot afternoon sun and the east side is blessed with that gentle morning sun. Walk your property at different times of the day and different times of the year. Notice the amount of sunlight and make notes.

What about the dryness or wetness of that location? You should consider not only the high and low spots in your landscape but also consider that location far away from a water source or that location near concrete or roadways that might dry out rather quickly. What about that shady, low spot near a water source? Or that spot on the west side away from a water source and near the street?

Look then at how much space is available for your plant to grow. Is there a roof overhanging your planting area? What about nearby buildings or established plants and trees? Would you also want to plant some smaller annuals near your new plant? Allow plenty of room for your plant to grow both vertically and horizontally. Just like children, puppies and kittens, they do not stay small and cute.

Now it is time to look at that plant. There are various ways to determine just what a plant's needs are. Again, these are primarily along the line of light, water and space. Of course, there are numerous other considerations like wind, attracting birds and insects, providing protection or privacy and attractiveness of the plants. There are several ways to determine the needs of your plant. You can do research in your gardening books or on-line. You can also use the QR code if available to research various plants. By taking the time to match the needs of your plants to what is provided by your location, you give your plants a chance to not only live but thrive.

If you have purchased or been given a lovely plant and the research shows it will not do well anywhere in your garden, then put it in a container, preferably a container on wheels. You can then move it around to help maximize providing what it needs. Or, seek out advice from one of those gardeners that seem to be able to make anything grow anywhere.

You can put zinnias in a wet, shady spot. But do not expect them to live and bloom. That fern might look nice in that sunny spot with the roses and you might have the opportunity to replant that fern year after year. Make a choice to "Live and Let Live" rather than like the movie title says to "Live and Let Die." The decision is yours.

Sites for Research:

To find what planting zone you are in:

<http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/>

For information and publications:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>

To learn about all types of plants:

<http://davesgarden.com/#b>

For a downloadable booklet for beginning gardeners:

http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/publications/Our_MG_Publications.htm



Photo by MG Sandra Devall

Be sure the plants you select are adapted to the climate and water in the area

good news and bad news

Monarchs Are on the Rise



by Linda Garren McKillip
MG 2003

With all the negative news about the deadly calamity facing monarch butterflies, a spark of hope glimmered on the pages of a Texas A&M publication February 2015. Craig Wilson, a long time "bug enthusiast" and senior research associate, reported that preliminary estimates from Mexico's monarch breeding grounds show the scale tipping slightly toward an increase in the butterfly's numbers from 33 million to an estimated 56.5 million.

While that news is very exciting, the sad story is that the monarch population has been on a steady decline for the last 20 years when their numbers soared into the hundreds of millions. Just two years ago, Mr. Wilson reported bad news for monarchs due to the devastating draught here in Texas and the rest of the Southwest. That drought decimated crops of wild growing milkweed (which you probably know is the only plant monarch caterpillars will eat). This loss of food source for the caterpillars resulted in a decrease in the number of monarchs.

With the record-setting draught came wildfires also destroying both the insect and its food source. Besides the weather, let's not forget the impact of loss of habitat due to agricultural practices and increase in various types of construction, the large-scale use of herbicides and development of herbicide resistant crops. The good news is that we are experiencing a rather mild winter which is touted as the reason for the recent uptick in monarch numbers.

"It is important to have a national priority of planting milkweed to assure there will be Monarchs in the future," Mr. Wilson tells us. "If we could get several states to collaborate, we might be able to provide a 'feeding corridor' right up to Canada for the monarchs." One exciting development supporting this concept is a partnership among the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Federation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to do exactly that. They intend "to plant thousands of acres of Interstate Highway 35 from Texas to Minnesota, a route where at least 50 percent of all monarchs migrate" according to the publication, Texas A&M Today.

"We can save the monarch butterfly in North America, but only if we act quickly and together," said Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. "And that is why we are excited to be working with the National Wildlife Federation and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to engage Americans everywhere, from schools and community groups to corporations and governments, in protecting and restoring habitat. Together we can create oases for monarchs in communities across the country."

"Known for its beautiful orange color, fascinating life cycle and remarkable annual migration, the monarch butterfly is the most iconic butterfly in North America," U.S. Senator from Minnesota Amy Klobuchar said. "With the butterfly rapidly disappearing, I am pleased to see the Fish and Wildlife Service taking positive steps to reverse its decline. We must build on this momentum, and I will continue to call on the public and private sectors to join together in the effort to protect the monarch butterfly."

Mr. Wilson is also working on his own grassroots effort with a project he calls Bugs-to-Schools. The intent is to get children interested in bugs so they can learn about the wonders of science. "The kids talk about their projects and get very excited about what they've learned. One of our goals is to show them that scientists are really not nerdy guys who wear pocket protectors while pouring chemicals into test tubes. Hopefully, many of these kids will be inspired enough to pursue a career as a scientist." Who wouldn't be amazed to learn that "it takes four generations of the insects to make it all of the way up to Canada, and because of lack of milkweed along the way, a lot of them just don't make it. But if people want to help, they should purchase and plant milkweeds, preferably milkweeds native to their state."

So why does the monarch get all the buzz? Think of it as the poster child representing the health of pollinators throughout the American landscape. Conserving and connecting habitat for monarchs will benefit other plants and animals, including important insect and avian pollinators. If you want to get more involved at home or at your schools, consider establishing a monarch Waystation at home. Check it out at <http://monarchwatch.org/waystations/>





By Donna J. Ward
MG 1996

Fertilize and prune the azaleas immediately after they finish blooming

FOLKS HAVE GOTTEN THE MESSAGE

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

Let me be the first to offer you my congratulations, and take this opportunity to pat you on the back - IF - you were a homeowner who resisted the urge to drastically prune your crape myrtles last month. Apparently many folks have gotten the message that chopping those limbs down to the nubbins only promotes weak spindly growth and totally destroys the architectural integrity of this very attractive tree. The "Lilac of the South" is a beautiful tree for your landscape, and for decades it has been traditional to butcher them in February under the false pretense that they needed to be pruned in order to bloom. The person that first perpetuated that rumor should be drawn and quartered in my opinion. Leave them be as Mother Nature intended them to be—a lovely flowering tree with attractive exfoliating outer bark revealing cinnamon or gray inner bark. Crape myrtles vary in size and bloom color, so there's no problem in finding one just made for your landscape. It's a bit past ideal planting time, but don't let that deter you, as that means 'sale' time to the nursery folks. If you plant it properly and afford it a little extra TLC it should do very well. Because they provide dappled shade, understory plants thrive under a crape, as they allow plenty of light for blooming shrubs such as azaleas and camellias. Again, thank you for leaving the pruning saw in the tool box.

Speaking of blooms, we should soon be inundated with color from the various shrubbery and trees in our landscapes, but we don't want them to outgrow the limited space that living in an urban environment provides. A good rule of thumb is that there are two pruning periods for ornamental shrubs and small trees. While they are dormant, feel free to safely prune althea, fruit trees, buddleia, holly, oleander, hydrangea, plumbago, vitex, pyracantha and yaupon. Once they have finished flowering, shape up the azalea, gardenia, jasmine, redbud, pittosporum, wisteria, bottlebrush, spirea, and crape myrtle (seed pods only). And if you have a hedge that needs pruning, prune so that the plant is wider at the base, allowing the sun to penetrate

the lower branches and encourage growth in that area. We've all seen hedges and foundation plantings where the lower branches are bare and the upper branches are lush and full. Lack of light on the lower branches is the reason—think 'triangle'—narrow at the top, wide at the bottom.

Suddenly it's March and you're remembering all the things you failed to do in January and February. Have you prepared the flower beds for all of the colorful annuals you want to plant? If not, do it now—marigold, zinnia, periwinkle, portulaca and cockscomb seeds need to be sowed ASAP.

Fertilize and prune the azaleas immediately after they finish blooming, give them a second feeding in 30 days, and a third feeding in another 30 days. But don't feed after June 1. As long as you're in the mood, now would be a good time to feed your trees. As you know by now, I'm an advocate of keeping very few fertilizer formulations on hand. A bag of 15-5-10 is ideal for general use, and doesn't take up much room in the garage. Remember that your tree's feeder roots extend out to the drip line and beyond, so applying fertilizer just at the base of the trunk doesn't do much good. If your trees are newly planted, forgo the fertilizer until their second season, but a root stimulator is a good idea. A good rule to remember with all fertilizers (granular or liquid) is to water first, fertilize, and water again. Keep the dry fertilizers off of the leaves of shrubs to avoid burning them.

There are so many veggies to plant this month, you'll need to get going immediately. Here's the seeds that need to go in now: beans (wax, snap, pole, bush), cucumber, corn (hurry), collards, lettuce, kohlrabi, southern peas, radishes, and summer squash. Grab a few transplants of tomato, peppers, eggplant, broccoli and cabbage (but hurry on those last two).

You've probably noticed March is going to be super busy



Photos by Donna Ward
Savannah Holly Berries



Blue Plumbago

THE ISLAND GARDEN

A Medley of Mint

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



By Jan Brick
MG 2001

In Greek mythology, mint was known as the herb of hospitality since one of mint's first known uses was as a room deodorizer. Mint was strewn across floors to cover the smell of the hard-packed soil and stepping on it helped to spread its scent. American colonists used mint both medicinally for headaches, heartburn and indigestion as well as for cooking.

Mints are perennial or annual herbs with wide-spreading underground and over-ground stems. Due to their tendency to spread unchecked, some mints are considered invasive. Leaf colors range from dark green, gray-green, purple, blue and pale yellow. The blooms are generally white to purple.

Most mints grow best in wet environments and moist soils. The leaves have a warm, fresh, aromatic, sweet flavor with a cool after-taste, and are used in teas, jellies, syrups, candies and ice cream.

Spearmint

Spearmint is a perennial plant that grows twelve to twenty-four inches tall, has a strong, sweet scent with lavender flower spikes in mid-summer. The crinkled or smooth stems have a tinge of red and the bright green leaves are pointed and toothed. It prefers moist but well-drained soil.

Spearmint spreads quickly by runners but can be propagated easily by seeds, cuttings, or division.

The fresh or dried leaves can be used to scent sachets and pot-pourris. Spearmint is used in baths to refresh and cool skin and in facials to cleanse the skin. The taste is milder than peppermint and is a popular flavoring in candy, gum, teas, meats, fish, fruit beverages, vinegars, jellies and sauces.

Curly Mint

Curly mint is a tall variety of spearmint with thick upright stalks and tightly clustered leaves. The bright green leaves are pointed with curled edges.

Curly mint has a fragrant aroma and a sweet flavor. Curly mint is often used for fresh mint tea or as a garnish for beverages and desserts. The tall herb with its frilly leaves and strong stalk makes a nice swizzle stick. Curly mint has a number of culinary uses, from marinades and rubs to jams and flavored whipped cream.

Chocolate Mint

Plant chocolate mint in an area that gets a few hours of morning sun, but that stays shady in the afternoon. Keep the soil moist by watering your chocolate mint regularly. The plant may survive a few dry spells, but don't let it dry out too often.

As other mints do, chocolate mint spreads quickly, forming creeping underground root systems and taking over your garden. Keep your chocolate mint in containers to prevent it from spreading. Chocolate mint will grow from cuttings from your original plant. Just snip off a stem and set the cutting in a pot of soil to re-grow. As a perennial plant, your chocolate mint will come back next year. The leaves will die during the winter, but the plant will form new shoots in the spring. Mix chocolate mint into just about anything where you would use chocolate; add it to cakes, muffins, cookies or pies.

Apple Mint

Europeans introduced this member of the mint family to America where it has been embraced as a garden plant including many cultivars. Reaching about two feet at maturity, apple mint plants have woolly stems, fragrant serrated leaves and terminal spikes that bear white or light pink flowers beginning in late summer or early fall.

Apple mint, also called "fuzzy mint" or "woolly mint" can be planted from seed or transplants and propagates easily by cuttings. Since apple mint can be invasive, consider confining the plants to a container. Provide an enriched soil that drains well and place in an area of full to part shade. Cut back a few times each season to maintain a vigorous and healthy plant. In the fall, cut apple mint back to the ground and cover with a 2-inch layer of mulch.

Bruised apple mint leaves added to a pitcher of ice water with lemon make a delicious "tea". Harvest the leaves when they are fresh by cutting the stalks just before they bloom. Hang the stalks to dry and store them in airtight containers.

Because of their speedy growth, one plant of each desired mint should provide more than enough mint for home use. Some mint species are more invasive than others and care should be taken when mixing mint with any other plants, lest the mint take over. Mints make good companion plants as they repel bothersome insects while attracting beneficial ones.



Photos by GCMG Digital Library





By Susan Meads-Leahy
MG 2014

Gardening with an Artistic Endeavor Meet a Master Gardener

Monica Martens

Often the type of gardener we become doesn't take form by mere accident. Rather it represents the culmination of our experiences from childhood. Sometimes our gardens become more than a landscape project. They are a home away from home or a place in which to put our imagination. For Monica Martens and her husband, Roy, who moved to Texas from Colorado four years ago, the garden has become just that.

She considered becoming a Master Gardener in the Mountain West. But with a relocation on the horizon, she decided to wait. After arriving in Texas and leaving behind a beloved custom-designed garden, she began researching her favorite flower, the iris, and the varieties that would grow here. She built a potted plant garden on their temporary apartment patio, even including a citrus tree. Soon after she started redesigning an existing garden at their permanent home. Encouraged to learn more from friend and fellow Master Gardener Alisa Rassmusen, she joined the Galveston County Master Gardener program, graduating with the 2013 class.

Monica fell in love with natural spaces as a child. She lived near the fabled Pooh Sticks Bridge in England. Once while walking through a park with her father, she saw a groundskeeper enter a door in the side of a hill. She implored her dad (unsuccessfully) to let her walk through the door. Her first examples of English gardens included fragrant flowers, secluded spaces, little walkways and shaded "rooms." Vines decorated tall brick walls. Gardens held the promise of adventure. Living and traveling between two continents fostered a love for exploration and day-hiking, which she pursued from an early age. After marrying a Wyoming outdoorsman with the same passion for nature and adventure, she continued to travel, visiting botanical gardens, hiking, and looking for wild varieties of plants like roses, berries and irises.

During her childhood, her parents continuously gave her accidental gardening lessons—composting leaf and grass clippings at the bottom of a hill in their yard; using "Doc Leaves" to remedy the pain of stinging nettles; creating landscape plans for various new homes on both ends of the East Coast. After relocating their family to Florida, Monica recalls her parents' garden as a palette of plants, with varying heights, textures and colors. Her mother, an avid decorator and volunteer with a local ballet company, taught her how to create art outdoors. Growing up in a household with a brother and father who were musicians, and being encouraged to study the arts herself through music and dance, she inadvertently approached gardening as a creative endeavor. While traveling as an adult, she started to wonder about sound in natural spaces—the rustling of the quaking aspen or bamboo.

While designing various gardens with her husband, she placed additional attention toward fashioning private sanctuaries wherever they lived, as owning a family farm or secluded mountain cabin was not practically feasible. With a plan toward eventually creating a forest garden in the mountains, they enjoy urban backyard retreats for now. Looking out at her Texas garden, the passion flower vine, which



did not freeze back this winter, creates a green wall that makes their backyard sanctuary feel more private and is beautiful to boot! For nearly 20 years they have experimented with kitchen gardening, to the point of making a dent in the grocery bill while in Colorado.

Adjusting to a different gardening climate presents some challenges. Cable and sprinkler lines are buried very close to the surface, since it's not important to protect them from freezing temperatures. Adding new plants or hardscape means carefully thinking about how to dig. The 12-month growing cycle requires more mowing and weeding, whereas in Colorado they were guaranteed a break from garden work half of the year. In Texas, they find the volume of organic matter incredible. Dealing with composting large quantities of banana tree leaves and rose branches, for instance, necessitates some thought. At times she has experimented with vermiculture. The pest pressure is greater on the Gulf Coast, so it is more difficult to grow vegetables, although the growing season is almost twice as long as in Colorado. She misses successfully growing tomatoes, which her grandfather grew in such quantities in Maryland that it perfumed the Summer air. Due to root knot nematodes, Monica has tried container gardening and pest-resistant varieties. Citrus and blueberries, however, provide a welcome gardening triumph with minimal work.

Freely admitting she doesn't like to follow label directions and will try to grow anything anywhere, she has planted tall bearded irises from the family farm in Wyoming. She is enjoying the green foliage for now and the symbol they represent of another home. But she has found regional suppliers of Louisiana irises and has set to building a new collection. Each year she presents "Irises for the Gulf Coast" at the Extension Office, furthering her own education in the process. She oversees our updates, news feeds and other postings to our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Galveston-County-Master-Gardeners/220088841395231>). Monica also enjoys talking with the public via the Master Gardener Hot Line. She has learned from personal experience that help from the gardening community is always close at hand. We are all adventurers and there is much to seek and enjoy outside.

Project: Demonstration Gardens

Carbide Park



*By Tom Fountain
MG 2008*



Phoos by Tom Fountain

It's been a little damp and cold here, but spring is at our door. Already the apple, avocado, peach, and plum trees have blooms. Our average temperatures have been around 3 degrees lower than normal and rainfall over an inch below normal across our area. At the garden, the last plantings of spinach, turnips, beets, carrots, and broccoli are in the ground. Within the next few weeks the tomatoes, squash, peppers, and cucumbers will also be planted. In the orchard some pruning, grafting and mulching have been taking place. Don't forget this is also a good time to nourish your young plants with some fertilizer.



Over the past few months, it has been cold and soggy on our work days. This has slowed progress some, but hasn't stopped it. So what happens on these days? Well, our Master Gardeners get out between showers and take care of gathering vegetables, getting beds ready for the next crop, and even showing visitors how to graft peach trees. When it is raining, we have to work where it's drier like in the barn or greenhouse. The classroom/lunchroom also gets a good workout. That is where we go to get warmed up, visit, and plan what we want to accomplish next.



Pictured above are: Bobbie showing off her garden hat while cutting Swiss chard. Gene is getting his bed ready for a new crop. Bill and Sue are showing a visitor how to graft peach trees. Henry, Stewart and crew are putting together the incaps for the greenhouse. Jim and Wes are watching over the classroom and trying to stay warm.

There are always lots of opportunities to participate in our garden activities. Ask any of our garden crew and they will help you get started. So get outside, breathe some fresh air and get your hands dirty. As a closing note, I would like to share a garden blessing Jan gave at the opening of the Herb Fair at Moody Garden this year. I enjoyed it and hope that it describes your spring gardening.

A Garden Blessing

By MG Jan Fountain

May your plants be plentiful, as your seeds unfold,
May your blooms be bountiful, and the bees be bold.
May your friends be many, and your heart be light.
Many blessings and wishes for this season's delights.





by Sandra Gervais
MG 2011

Carrots on my mind—and Basil—and Spinach

Seasonal Bites

Thanks to Chef Randy Evans, who was guest speaker at the “Friends of Moody Gardens” luncheon last week, carrots are on my mind. It was fascinating to hear him talk about the great pesto that can be made from carrot tops. Who knew? I’ll have to find that recipe somewhere later!

Meanwhile, I have a crisper full of beautiful, fresh, topless carrots and a new recipe to try from a friend in Lafayette. He brings it to family get-togethers where even anti-carrot relatives are happy to grab a spoonful. It supposedly comes from the Piccadilly Cafeteria chain. Though it can be served with whipped topping for dessert, his family enjoys it as just another vegetable. I think my family will do the same so it’s named for him.

Carroll’s Carrot Soufflé

2 lbs. carrots	1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 cup sugar	1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla
2 tablespoons flour	

Peel the carrots, cut in half, cover with water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and cook until quite tender (about 30 min.). Drain. Purée all ingredients together (use a food processor or immersion blender)

3 eggs at room temperature---add one egg at a time, blending each in well.

1/4 cup soft butter---add in and blend.

Lightly grease a 1-1/2 quart soufflé dish, then coat with 1-1/2 tablespoons or more of sugar. Pour in carrot mixture and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes, until center is set when touched with finger. It can be served immediately with a whipped topping.

However, if this is served as a vegetable with a meal, don’t worry about it deflating over time. Once the top has gone down, it won’t be as pretty but it’ll still taste great and can be reheated with the rest of the meal. So don’t think about all the soufflé horror stories out there. The goal is not to make something pretty but to make something easy and yummy! Just think of this as “guy” cooking at its finest and bake it in a deep enough dish so no cleanup is required. It makes a good amount. Keep in refrigerator because fresh garlic was used. Bring it to room temp and shake well before using.

Basil Salad Dressing. (Good on Spinach-Basil Salad or other salads)

1/2 cup good olive oil	2 teaspoons sugar (some cooks use sugar substitute to taste)
1/4 cup red wine vinegar	2 large garlic cloves, crushed or chopped
1 tablespoon dried basil	1/2 teaspoon salt
	1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Mix all and let sit overnight for flavors to meld.

Adjust it to your taste. Some like to add red pepper flakes, more basil, garlic or salt, etc.

Spinach-Feta Salad

1 ripe avocado, diced	4 oz. feta cheese, crumbled
1/2-1 red onion, finely sliced	Fresh spinach, washed and dried (can use large packaged spinach)
1/2 cup walnuts (can use pecans)	

(Judge how much spinach you need for the meal and place in bowl. I use about 8-10 cups)

Put spinach in tossing bowl. Sprinkle on cheese and nuts, then onions. Add avocado close to serving so it doesn’t discolor. Toss generously with Basil Dressing. (See above recipe.)

For Christmas, add finely sliced fresh red peppers for a festive look.





MINUTES - FEBRUARY 2015 MONTHLY MG MEETINGS

By Cindy Croft
MG 2009

The meeting was called to order on February 17, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. at Carbide Park. After a potluck dinner, members from the 2015 Master Gardener class were introduced and welcomed.

Treasurer Julie Cartmill reported on the proceeds of our recent plant sale which was very successful. This sale was the first time vegetables were available and 88% sold. Plants left over will be used in the community beds at the Demonstration Garden.

It was noted that citrus for next year's sale will need to be selected in the next 4 to 5 weeks. Wagons were an issue at this sale, but we may work out a trade with another county MG Association to borrow wagons rather than purchase more because storage is an issue here.

Our State Association Delegates, Velda and Terry Cuculis, reported on upcoming conferences. The 2015 TMGA Conference is in Belton, Texas, running from April 16 to April 18. The 2016 conference will be in Collin County on a Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday program schedule. A&M may do the 2018 conference; however, 2017 is still undecided.

Dr. Johnson spoke on the implementation of our new system for reporting volunteer hours in 2015. You should have received instructions via email, but just in case, the website is <https://texas.volunteersystem.org/>. If you have trouble with the system, you can head up to the Extension Office and someone will help you get started.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30.

Successful Fruit Tree and Vegetables Sale



Upcoming Events **Tuesday Night & Saturday Seminars**

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

GARDENING FOR JEWELS... HUMMINGBIRDS

Tuesday, March 3, 2015

6:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.

Galveston County Master Gardener Deborah Repasz, photographer and hummingbird enthusiast, will give a program highlighting ways to increase hummingbird sightings in your yard, by creating an inviting habitat, including examples of shelter, food, and water, plus a discussion of the impact of the use of pesticides. Plants presented will be proven winners grown in the speaker's yard, as well as other resources to utilize to attract hummingbirds.

HONEY BEES AROUND THE GARDEN

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Presented by 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 honeybee keeping.

THE CULTURE AND CARE OF PALMS

Saturday, March 21, 2015

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Palm tree enthusiast and Galveston County Master Gardener O. J. Miller has over 16 years of 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.

TOMATO STRESS MANAGEMENT (Part 3 of a three part series)

Saturday, March 21, 2015

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.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 identifying various tomato diseases and insect stress factors and how to minimize them to increase yields.



Texas Master Gardeners Association

To take a look at what is going on in our Texas Master Gardeners Association, check out the following website:

THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE - <http://txmg.org/>

March/April "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.

a well-deserved

Three Cheers

When things change, often we are pressed to stretch ourselves, step out beyond our comfort level. Such is the case for Master Gardener John Jons.

Last fall, the MG Association found itself in a pickle. Our fall sale was looming in the distance and we found ourselves without a speaker for the preview presentation given on the morning of the sale. We needed someone who could speak well to an audience, convey the needed information regarding the plant material in such a way that those attending the presentation would want to rush out to the sale yard and buy everything!, and do it all in 59 minutes.

John knows his roses, but the sale was going to also have perennials, and a bunch of citrus, and lots of fall vegetables! That's a garden full of things to talk about, and let's face it, most gardeners would be a little hesitant to discuss so many different types of plants. But John was willing to take on the challenge. And he did it well.

First, John sought out information from the MGs within our own organization who have the expertise in the areas of vegetable varieties, and citrus, and perennial plants, and then he did his own researching on some of the plant material that was new and different. Then he compiled the information, and created a PowerPoint presentation, which was well-received by the attendees.

And now, fast forward to the Spring sale, we were in the same vat of pickles. And John was ready for the next challenge—this time he had to learn all about tomatoes and peppers and fruit trees, oh my! And be able to stand in front of a crowd and dispense the information with confidence. The Spring sale was one of our highest grossing on record—indeed the attendees did rush from the presentation into the sale yard and bought everything in sight.

To me, that's pretty awesome. And so, I say "Three Cheers for John Jons" and Thank You.



By Laura Bellmore
MG 1992



John Jons, MG 2003



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 Windus 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.

Tideway is a program of the Transitional Learning Center

Dr. Johnson has approved Tideway Transitional Learning Center (644 Central City Blvd., Galveston, Texas 77551) as a location where Master Gardener service hours may be earned. Plans to prepare the gardens at Tideway for spring planting are ready and volunteers are needed. Volunteers can contact Brack Collier at bcollier@tlc-galveston.org. The focus is on the long-term needs of individuals with an acquired brain injury. The program offers accessible horticultural experiences, through which individuals with a brain injury can improve sensory awareness, motor skills, range of motion, endurance and flexibility as well as regain confidence, and learn new skills. This provides the opportunity for our residents to develop the necessary skills to gain and maintain a productive lifestyle whether it is on site or volunteering in the community. The residents at Tideway are very much "hands on" in building the different garden beds, in fact some of the residents came up with the designs. And they have chickens.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Tour Guides for "First-Thursdays-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 Robert Marshall at 281-993-5595 or e-mail at rbrtm01@att.net or MG Bobbie Ivey at 713-748-8564 or email at blivey@sbccglobal.net to volunteer.

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.

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://txmg.org>. 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.

Irrigation Efficiency Specialist – Bexar County

March 23 @ 8:00 am - March 25 @ 5:00 pm
San Antonio Botanical Garden, 555 Funston Place, San Antonio, 78209 United States - | \$200.00 per person
This hands-on training will include practices for determining irrigation efficiency, setting controllers, soak and cycle method, minor irrigation repairs, system trouble shooting, catch can test, converting spray head irrigation to new water conserving head, converting spray irrigation to drip irrigation and many other water conservation practices. For information, contact Karen Sanders (972)952-9671, e-mail karen.sanders@tamu.edu.

Plant Propagation Specialist – Tarrant County

May 7 @ 12:30 pm - May 9 @ 12:00 pm
\$200.00 per person - Tarrant County Resource Connection, Building 2300
2300 Circle Drive, Fort Worth, TX 76119 United States
To be eligible for Master Gardener Plant Propagation Specialist Training, an individual must possess an up-to-date Master Gardener certification. Master Gardener applicants must be approved by their local County Extension Agent. The Master Gardener Plant Propagation Specialist program is designed to train and certify Master Gardeners to become part of a state corps of Plant Propagation experts and educators. To become a certified Master Gardener Plant Propagation Specialist, Master Gardeners are required to attend the Master Gardener Plant Propagation Specialist training to fulfill training requirements and subsequently meet service requirements described below. Training activities during the course will empower Master Gardeners to complete these service requirements. Organizer – Billie Hammack – blhammack@ag.tamu.edu



Here is a great way to support our GCMGA

Amazon will donate 0.5% of our personal purchases to Galveston County Master Gardener Association.

All you have to do is:

Go to smile.amazon.com -Choose Galveston County Master Gardener Association as your charity. - Save smile.amazon.com to your favorites. - Always start from this site to do your amazon shopping. - You should see your chosen charity in the top bar on amazon's website. - If you have any problems, search smile on amazon's website



the last word . . .

INSIGHT ON SUNLIGHT

(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

In a previous garden column entitled “Common Landscaping Mistakes,” I received several emails asking for clarification on recommendations of, “Be sure to pay attention to the little tag that you get when you buy the plant. Make sure that the plants you select will have the level of sunlight (or shade) that they need to thrive.”

All of the emails had a common inquiry but one email stated the problem well: “Exactly how much sun is full sun and just how much shade is part shade?”

Nearly every potted plant in a nursery or garden center comes with one—a little plastic label tucked into the pot with an icon on it that lets you know what level of sun exposure the plant needs for optimal performance.

It's certainly a tribute to the horticulture industry that so many plant lines have been developed to provide gardeners with a wide array of options for a wide array of design possibilities. The labels on potted plants provide a lot of valuable information for the gardener including common name or names, botanical name, reasonably accurate plant dimensions at maturity, as well as helpful planting and care information.

We are familiar with nutrition facts labels found on most food packages in the United States. However, plant labels are not regulated by federal or state agencies, and they do fall somewhat short when it comes to standardization in meaning of such terms as full sun, sun, part sun and part shade.

Light is one of the most important elements in growing any plant. Light is also the primary element that we have least control over in the landscape.

If a sun-loving plant doesn't receive enough sun, it will likely produce less foliage and fewer blooms. If a shade-loving plant receives too much sun, the foliage may wilt and scorch. Either way, a plant is put under a lot of stress when trying to grow under unfavorable lighting conditions.

Unfortunately, exact science is not at play here as there are always other factors to consider, such as the orientation of the plant in reference to the sun's location throughout the day and whether or not the plant is heat and drought tolerant.

There are many different definitions of full sun, sun, part sun and part shade. Add to that the different light conditions in each individual landscape and you have a very confusing situation. I find it useful to define the conditions as follows and then assess each site in the landscape from there.

- Full sun: Full sun means just that—nothing blocks the sunshine from dawn to sunset.
- Sun: One would likely think that sun would imply exposure to full sun. In application, this term describes places sites that receive direct sunlight for at least six hours or more each day, including some or all of the midday hours. Examples would be sites with little or no tree cover and/or western exposures.
- Part Sun/Part Shade: Direct sun for four to six hours per day. Sites with eastern exposure or those shaded in afternoon by large trees or buildings.

- Shade: Less than four hours of sun per day. Generally considered to be in areas under mature trees or where buildings block sunlight most of the day.

To determine what exposure you have for any site you should observe the site at various times during the day. Figure out when the site is in shade or sun; determine the number of hours of sunshine and the time periods when sunshine hits your site.

Morning sun for six hours will be acceptable for many sun or part sun plants, while four hours of afternoon sun along the Texas Gulf Coast could cause leaf burn and bleaching on part sun or shade-loving plants. Watch your plants for signs their light requirements are not being met. Long, leggy growth is a sign that the plant is not getting enough sun, while red (sunburned) or pale (bleached) leaves might mean too much sun.

Placing plants in an ideal location is not likely to be a major issue in most instances, but if otherwise properly planted and cared for, plants struggle over their first growing season. Assessing their actual light exposure in your landscape would be a first priority.

I admit to struggling for some time to establish a bed of dancing ladies ginger (*Globba winitii*) in what I thought should be an ideal location. After dividing the plants last fall, I moved half of the clumps to an even more shaded site and replanted the remaining half in the same bed where the clumps were harvested.

The clumps that were moved to the more shaded area (on the north side of the house versus the north side of an eight-foot tall wood fence) managed to produce robust foliage and an overabundance of blooms.

The difference in sun exposure was not that exceptional but that was my estimation. However, the dancing ladies ginger could definitely tell—and really responded to—the difference and that's all that mattered. Just remember, part of the fun of gardening is learning to work with nature, not against it.

Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.



Photo by Dr. William M. Johnson

2015 MGA MONTHLY MEETINGS

February 3, 2015

John John - Pre-Fruit Tree Sale Presentation
10:00 am - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

February 17, 2015

Bobbie Ivey - Vegetable Beds at Demo Gardens
6:30 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

March 10, 2015

Rod & Lynne Mize
4004 Lovers Lane
5:30 pm - Dickinson

April 14, 2015

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

May 12, 2015

Tish Reustle - Backyard Meeting
5:30 pm - 902 West Viejo
Friendswood

June 9, 2015

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

July 14, 2015

Brock Colliers (from Tideway) & Monica Martins
7:00 pm Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

August 11, 2015

Mary Lou Kelso, Moody Gardens
Galveston Island
Venues begin at 9:15 am

September, 2015 TBA

Fall Plant Sale Preview
6:00 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

October 13, 2015

Helen Bashline & Gail Ayers - Backyard Meeting
5:30 pm - 1016 Church
Galveston Island

November 10, 2015

Ira Gervais - Annual Meeting, Election of Officers
6:00 pm - Extension Office
Carbide Park - La Marque

December 8, 2015

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 - TBA

With spring finally here, it is time for the Galveston County Master Gardeners to move out doors for the Backyard Meetings. First up will be the March meeting with Lynne and Rod Mize at their Dickinson home. They have country living abounding with gardening opportunities and a few surprises.

In April, Karen and Tom Morris have invited the Master Gardeners to their Bacliff home on the Houston Ship Channel. Plan to visit the orchard and enjoy the evening along with a water view. Don't forget to bring a pot luck contribution for the collective dinner. Backyard meetings are a fun time to visit with other Master Gardeners. Hope to see you there.

We Want Your Feedback

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



Mize Home



Morris Home

