

Gulf Coast Gardening

WRITTEN BY GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS IN COOPERATION
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Issue 198 - November/December 2015

Fall Colors in the Texas Upper Gulf Coast

Our landscapes can still be full of color in
November and December



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“Summertime is always the best of what might be”
. . . . Charles Bowden
“Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the Fall”
. . . F. Scott Fitzgerald



*By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008*

Where did it go? The summer of 2015 should have gotten a speeding ticket. Now our Gulf Coast Fall is here with its distinctly tropical overtones. Many of my flowering plants have been reinvigorated by the shorter days and cooler temperatures. The cooler wind has roused the inhabitants of my gardens and most are in cheerful fall bloom. Therefore, I'll have to claim fall as my second favorite season after summer (but I could do without the falling leaves everywhere—they're not the ones “leaf peepers” travel to see—they're just brown, dead, exhausted by the heat Texas leaves!

It's almost the end of another busy and successful year for our MG Association, many changes have occurred in the Demonstration Garden, the greenhouse is virtually completed, our plant sales were rewarding and our drone video was fabulous and has had myriad views. If you missed it you can see it at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDb6SOREsWY&feature=youtu.be>

Soon it will be time to take a short break from our gardening chores. This newsletter will give you some ideas of what NOT to do at this time of the year along with a few “DO's” (page 9). The AgriLife Extension Office, our Master Gardener Hotline and Master Gardeners are getting more and more questions from our community concerning “crazy ants;” read the latest info on these marauders and their proposed correct name in the article on page 4. Could you answer a question on curry—curry plants, curry leaves or curry spices? See the story on page 6 to learn the difference.

MG Lisa Belcher talks about what she learned in the garden, another teaching moment from Dr. J on page 8. Also featured are several continuing topics including Herb of the Month starring Comfrey (page 16), Tool of the Month Primer (page 18) with details on the types of shovels to lessen our work loads and the very interesting study Growing Hops in Galveston County—examine what we've learned so far on page 15.

Continuing with the history of our Demonstration Garden, Frank Jackson describes our Memory Walkway and gives us info on how to place an order for memory bricks (page 21). Our new Administrative Assistant, Ginger Benson, shares a charming story (page 7) about mysterious white webbing on muscadine grapes and confirms, once again, that Dr. Johnson outshines Google (and he's faster, too)!

Please enjoy meeting Master Gardener Kaye Corey on page 14. She is quite accomplished and also leads the Heritage Junior Master Gardener Program. Our Best Shots story features perennial fall colors on pages 12-13.

Do you ever look at those tiny roses in the grocery store and wonder how they'll do in your landscapes? Read the Miniature Rose Study on pages 10 & 11 to find out. Sandra Gervais, in Seasonal Bites (page 20), gives us two new recipes to try—one involves a massage!

In The Last Word, Dr. Johnson educates us on planting trees in the fall (page 25) Don't miss the Carbide Park update on page 19, and all our calendars, garden team schedules, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities and announcements have been updated.

Here's an Irish toast to you all as we ring out 2015 –
Dung hills rise and castles fall, we are all equal one and all.
See you all in 2016!



Photo by Linda Steber

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Cover: Our landscapes can still be full of color in November and December
Photo by MG Tabatha Holt



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By Sandy Zeek
MG Intern 2015

ask a master gardener

Q&A

Hot Line Topic - Tawny Crazy Ants

Question: Are Tawny Crazy Ants the same thing as Raspberry Ants?

Jim Stanley has been a Master Gardener since 2012. He became especially interested in Tawny Crazy Ants as a result of answering numerous calls to the Master Gardener HotLine about these insect pests, as well as personally dealing with an infestation at his home. Jim's favorite maxim is "Learn something new every day."

Q: Are Tawny Crazy Ants the same thing as Raspberry Crazy Ants?

A: Yes, those are common names and both refer to the same ant identified by entomologists as *Nylanderia fulva*. The species name "fulva" means tawny in Latin and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "tawny" as a brownish-orange to light brown color. Common names can be confusing. In lieu of a scientific classification, the ants were named after their discoverer, Tom Rasberry (owner of Rasberry's Pest Professionals in Pearland, Texas), who identified the first occurrence of this new invasive ant species in Texas near Pasadena in 2002.

Tawny Crazy Ant became the official common name for *Nylanderia fulva* after the Entomological Society of America (ESA) proposed this moniker as the official common name in April 2013. This name replaced all other common names for this ant, including Hairy Crazy ant, Caribbean Crazy Ant, and Raspberry Crazy Ant. It's probably going to take a while for Texans to adopt this new moniker on a wide scale.

Q: How are Tawny Crazy Ants identified?

A: These reddish-brown ants are one of the smallest ants, with worker ants being only about 1/8" long. They will appear in huge numbers in the landscape. Unlike other ants which forage along obvious, repetitive trails, the erratic or chaotic movements of these ants are unique and give them the name "crazy." Tawny Crazy Ants do not build centralized nests, beds or mounds, and do not emerge to the surface from nests through central openings like other ants do. The nests of Tawny Crazy Ants are not necessarily apparent because they are found underneath or inside of almost anything that provides shelter including fallen logs, potted plants, rocks, bricks, and other structures.

Additionally, other ant species have only one queen for reproduction in a nest while the Tawny Crazy Ant can have multiple queens for reproduction in a nest. Their nests are more like an enormous commune with large colonies or groups of colonies.

Q: What are some negative impacts of Tawny Crazy Ant infestations?

A: Tawny Crazy Ants are problematic for several reasons. For one, the sheer numbers of these ants can be overwhelming to desirable wildlife in the area, driving them away and upsetting the delicate balance of nature. Even fire ants can be driven off! The number of ants is so massive [I was inclined to say "huge" but a current presidential contender currently "owns" that description] that if an infestation

is chemically treated and the ants die off, collecting the dead ants for disposal can be a time consuming as well as very smelly operation. Second, Tawny Crazy Ants will fill the void in almost any space including electrical equipment, causing equipment failure due to short circuits.

Q: What is their main food?

A: Tawny Crazy Ants are attracted to moisture and are omnivorous, so they will eat almost anything including small animals and other insects. Since Tawny Crazy Ants are also attracted to sweet liquids, they will actually "herd" and care for certain soft-bodied insects (including aphids and mealybugs) in order to keep a much-loved food, honeydew, in constant supply. These ants will also forage into homes or other buildings.

Q: Do Tawny Crazy Ants sting like other ants?

A: No, they do not have stingers. They will bite but their bite is almost imperceptible unless they bite in a very sensitive area.

Q: Are Tawny Crazy Ants active all year long?

A: Tawny Crazy Ants are definitely active throughout the year. Their period of highest activity (and greatest increase in population) typically occurs from mid-April to mid-September in the Galveston County area. However, during the cooler months of the year Tawny Crazy Ants are less active and thus less likely to be noticeable.

Q: What treatments are available and effective for an infestation?

A: Treatment by a professional exterminator is the most effective. The products used by professionals are not readily available to consumers. After treatment, the dead ants must be removed so surfaces underneath are exposed for additional treatment and so that the nasty odor from the dead does not become a problem. There are contact insecticides which can be used by a homeowner in a gel form which is applied to surfaces where Tawny Crazy Ants are active. This form of treatment lasts for a very short time.



Photo by Herman Auer

Continued on Page 5

Tawny Crazy Ants

Continued from Page 4



Q: What do you see as the biggest problem from Tawny Crazy Ants for homeowners?

A: For a homeowner whose home is surrounded by forested land which is not his or hers, that area would very likely continue to be a source of re-infestation by Tawny Crazy Ants. In that situation, any treatment of his or her personal property would yield only temporary management. Otherwise, just the aggravation of the relentless numbers, the potential for electrical problems from an infestation of the home or other buildings on the property, and the inability to enjoy being outdoors in the yard are significant problems.

Q: What can homeowners do to slow the spread of Tawny Crazy Ants?

A: Don't become an unknowing agent of dispersal! Nurseries and homeowners have played pivotal roles in the rapid and widespread dispersal of this invasive insect pest. They do it because these ants like to live in these pre-existing cavities, like flower pots or plywood that are left on the ground too long or in old boxes. Inspection of potted plants for the presence of Tawny Crazy Ants (or any other ants) before purchasing such items would be prudent. Alert store management if any ants are found so that the spread of this irritating pest can at least be slowed. It is important to be aware that Tawny Crazy Ants have been in Galveston County for many years (including Galveston Island) so the local concern would be to NOT aid colonization in areas free of Tawny Crazy Ants.

Tawny Crazy Ants spread very slowly without the aid of humans because they do not have winged dispersal like other ants, including the Imported Red Fire Ant. Tawny Crazy Ant colonies do not send out winged reproductive ants to form new colonies (known as swarms), which means their spread is quite slow over land, averaging about 207 meters or 680 feet per year in rural landscapes.

Q: What is a good way to get more information about Tawny Crazy Ants?

A: My favorite source is through Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension. There is a publication entitled Tawny (Rasberry) Crazy Ant which is very thorough and informative. Additionally, at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park back on July 30, there was a terrific presentation provided by Dr. Robert Puckett, Assistant Professor of Entomology and Extension Specialist at College Station, and Dr. Paul Nester, an Extension Entomologist with the Harris County AgriLife Extension Office. The PowerPoint presentation from each of these men is available for those who may be interested.



Photo by Herman Auer



Photo by Carole Sattler

Yes - those are Tawny Crazy Ants - EVERYWHERE!



By Camille Goodwin
MG 2008

curry plants, curry leaves and curry spices

Do You Know Your Curries?

Question: What is the difference between Curry Plant, Curry Leaves and Curry Spices

CURRY PLANT (*Helichrysum italicum*).

The curry plant from southern Europe is a fairly new addition to lists of herbal plants. Although sometimes maligned for kitchen use because its flavor is so mild and much of the aroma is lost in cooking, it is popular among adventurous cooks. It has a somewhat sweet scent, with a spicy, flowery note that seems at ease with both sweet and savory fare. It can also be added to dressings to season salads or it can be used to flavor meats, such as chicken. Even though curry plant isn't the flavor inspiration promised by its complex and very compelling scent, it is still useful in the kitchen. When finely chopped, it compliments mild dishes and ingredients like eggs, yogurt, mild cheeses and even fish. It enhances vinegar blends and makes a nice garnish. You can also make an herb wreath, swag or even potpourri from curry plant.

Curry Plant is a tender perennial. It does best in U.S. zones 8 to 11. It cannot tolerate a hard frost. It prefers soil that drains well, full sun and warm conditions. It's a perfect choice for a Xeriscape (low water) garden and performs well in poor soil. It doesn't require mulching and it's also a natural pest repellent. Bugs tend to avoid it, and deer hate it. As a young plant, it looks like a cross between rosemary and lavender, growing dusty greenish-grey, needle shaped leaves. When the plant matures, the appearance changes as small round, yellow-colored flowers bloom on the stalks of the plant which may reach 24-30 inches in height.

The curry plant should not be confused with curry leaves that grow on the curry tree.

CURRY LEAVES (*Murraya koenigii*).

Although curry leaves are also used to season various foods, the plant providing these leaves is considerably larger and is a different plant entirely from the curry plant. It does not look like curry powder, it does not taste like curry powder, and curry leaves are NOT an ingredient in curry powder. Curry leaves, are, however, an important ingredient in many curry dishes, especially in India, Thailand, and other Asian countries. It is often used in a similar way that we use bay leaves: both are used in long simmering stews and soups and are a more passive aromatic addition rather than "THE main" spice for the dishes. It has a fragrant, citrus-like flavor and not only has amazing uses for culinary purposes, but also has been used in Ayurvedic medicine for centuries. It grows well in our horticultural zone.

Curry leaf is available in many Asian and Indian grocery stores nationwide and is usually found in small bundles or sold in plastic bags. The leaves will keep in the refrigerator for two or three weeks. Before cooking, fresh curry leaf won't really remind you of curry, but once the leaves are roasted in an oil, the aroma and flavor change remarkably, and the flavor is pleasant and delicious. Curry leaf is also used in pickles, egg dishes, chutneys and many other Asian and Indian dishes. The plant is known as "sweet neem" in India. Add the leaves to soups, stews, steamed vegetables, and rice for a mild curry flavor. Remove sprig before serving. To cook with the true curry leaf, which is generally used fresh but also has uses when dried, first heat ghee (clarified butter) or oil to almost smoking, toss in some garlic and roast it,

along with some diced onion, then toss in six or eight curry leaflets (removed from the stem). The leaves immediately sizzle and pop, releasing their unique flavor into the oil. They can then be removed, or left in the dish as the other ingredients are added.

CURRY SPICES. Actual curry (powder) seasoning can contain as little as 6 spices or 20 or more finely ground spices with flavors ranging from mild and savory to slightly spicy and sweet to fiery hot. The recipe for curry powder is a blend of chile, ground cumin, ginger, garlic coriander, cinnamon, red pepper, fenugreek, allspice, black pepper, cardamom, cloves, mustard, fennel, mace and turmeric (which gives curry its distinctive yellow color). In that mix, several of the ingredients, including mustard, cumin, coriander, fennel and cinnamon, are roasted separately before being ground and added to the other ingredients. Curry is a complex seasoning that varies from region to region (nothing like the generic combination found in the grocery store), even from family to family throughout Southeast Asia. Curry seasonings are often vastly different depending on the season. During summer months, the seasoning is mixed with spices that cool the body and in winter, a different blend helps keep the body warm. Generally whole spices are dry roasted, then crushed in a spice grinder. Powdered spices are added to the roasted ground spices. Many recipes exist for curry blends; you can find sweet, medium and spicy blends on-line to suit your personal taste.





By Genevieve Benson
MG 2015 Intern

looking for answers

What is this white stuff on my muscadine grapevine?

A Master Gardener is one who is trained in the science and art of horticulture. As volunteers these individuals are expected to pass on the information they learn during their training to the public. To call myself a novice in the field of horticulture would be a most accurate statement for I am a Galveston County Master Gardener Intern with the Class of 2015.

My exposure to gardening before the Master Gardener program came from volunteering at a community garden where I followed the directions given to me by someone who actually knew what she was doing (she is a veteran Master Gardener!). I attended every session of the 2015 Master Gardener Training Course offered in February, March and early April and I gobbled up every piece of information given to me but one simply cannot learn everything there is to know about horticulture during a nine-week course. There is still so much for me to learn and fortunately I have the perfect opportunity to further my knowledge of all things plant related.

Recently, I have taken up the post of Administrative Assistant to our County Extension Agent for Horticulture, Dr. William M. Johnson. Horticulture-related queries come across my desk frequently (make that very, very frequently); in order to answer them accurately, research has become a part of my daily routine. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides an abundance of information when searching for answers. However, I must admit there are times when Google has not always come to my rescue in my fact-finding expeditions.

For example, in early October I received an email from a resident of the county asking about some webbing on her muscadine grape vine. Her e-mail was as follows:

“We have an old muscadine vine which we discovered on our property growing wild. We have found what appears to be webbing growing on the lateral vines. I can wipe/scratch it off. I cannot determine if this was caused by some bug creating it (I never saw a bug) or if this was a symptom of a fungus/disease problem. Not sure how to treat or if I should bother treating—is it natural to plant or something harmful to plant?”

Immediately I went to work researching possible causes for the webbing on the lateral vines of her grapevine. Running a search through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension articles for webbing on grapevines brought articles citing the grape berry moth, *Endopiza viteana*. However, the pictures accompanying the resident’s email showed webbing only on the vines, additionally, there was no webbing present on the grape clusters. After what seemed to be hours of fruitless Googling, I decided to turn to our in-house expert, Dr. Johnson.

After one look at the picture and a review of the email he proclaimed it to be “normal growth!” The term he used to describe the white webbing on the vines was pubescence. New leaves produced by muscadine grapes will typically have fuzzy growth (white in color) on the surface, much like the peach fuzz appearing above the

upper lip of a twelve-year-old (or thereabouts) boy would experience. With the shock of receiving an answer so quickly, I asked him how he knew what this was by just a glance; his response, “My years of experience!”

Just like humans, newly produced leaves on some plants can also suffer damage from too much sun. (This distinctive level of leaf pubescence is lost as a muscadine grape leaf matures.) Pubescence in young muscadine grape leaves has been reported to considerably modify light penetration. In essence, pubescence on plant leaves provides a function similar to that of sunscreen lotion on human skin (i.e., to protect the skin from the harmful effects of exposure to the sun).

The Information Age has accustomed us to expect readily available answers with the stroke of a few keys. When those answers do not jump out at us, it can be quite frustrating. Despite the irritation regarding the lack of information available on the Internet concerning the webbing on the grapevine, this episode served as an important reminder for me. Information from experts — i.e., true experts — in their respective fields, is invaluable.

Years of experience in the field have equipped these individuals with knowledge only seasoned veterans will possess. The Internet is a wonderful resource but there is no replacement for the knowledge accumulated from a long and extensive career. Luckily, I have a direct line to this wealth of information as I navigate my way through my own expertise levels!



Photo submitted in e-mail by L. Seyfert

Pubescence: The term Dr. J used to describe the white webbing on muscadine grape vines.



By MG Lisa Belcher
Class of 2014

I was convinced I found a new insect species

What I Learned in the MG Demo Garden

Fifty-three Galveston County Master Gardeners showed up at the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park in La Marque on Thursday, October 1, 2015. I had a fascinating discussion that day during lunch. I was regaling to Dr. Johnson my tale of finding a really cool looking set of insect eggs, even proudly showing a photo of these eggs on my iPhone.

I was describing how each egg had been deposited on top of a very slender, hair-like structure that was white in color. The mass of eggs had been laid in a very distinctive spiraling fashion—I referred to the pattern a “Stonehenge” design. I was convinced I found a new insect species. But no, that was not to be; I was informed that the eggs had been laid by a Green Lacewing (*Chrysoperla rufilabris*).

The Green Lacewing is an amazing and beneficial insect which naturally controls a variety of soft-bodied insects that commonly feed on plants in our gardens and landscapes. Female Green Lacewings often deposit their egg masses on plants already infested by aphids. A few days later, the larvae hatch and have a voracious appetite. They are nicknamed the “Aphid Lions” because once they emerge from their egg sacks, they immediately begin to feed.

Aphid Lions are known to consume up to 200 aphids and other soft-bodied insects a week, and will revert to cannibalism if nothing else is available. (NOTE: Female Green Lacewings will also randomly deposit their egg masses on a variety of solid surfaces. The egg mass I found on the front door on my home started my educational journey and this newsletter article. I later found another egg mass on the bottom side of my hummingbird feeder!)

I was surprised to learn that adult stage Green Lacewings are non-predaceous and feed on pollen, nectar and even honeydew for sustenance. It’s the “teenage” larvae that are so very effective at providing free pest control in the garden.

While aphids are commonly preyed upon, Aphid Lions also feed upon mealybugs, psyllids, thrips, mites, whitefly eggs and very small caterpillars. The larval stage of an Aphid Lion’s life cycle will last for 2-3 weeks before they spin a cocoon, and 14 days later (depending on temperatures and other environmental factors) emerge as an adult.

Like most gardeners, I had seen the adult stage of the Green Lacewing flying around after nightfall in the landscape as they are attracted to outdoor lights. I knew them to be beneficial, but I did not know *how* beneficial they actually are in our garden. After my conversation with Dr. Johnson during lunch that day in the MG Demonstration Garden and upon my return to my home, I started looking around my garden and found more of those “Stonehenge” patterns, and I smiled.

I love going to the MG Demonstration Garden each week. Whether it be work on the Gazebo area or see how the plants are doing in the Greenhouse, or spending time with my fellow MG’s, I feel happy to be part of this community. But what I truly enjoy most is the sprinkling of continuing education here and there, and for me, the knowledge I gained on that first Thursday in October in the MG Demonstration Garden came from a simple question I asked of Dr. Johnson, “Want to see a cool picture on my iPhone?”



Side view of eggs on my hummingbird feeder



Eggs on my front door



Green Lacewing Larvae



Green Lacewing Adult

Photos by Lisa Belcher and GCMG Digital Library



By Kaye Corey
MG 2001

don't put your water hose away A few what NOT to do now tips for gardeners!

From the cool mornings of a pleasant November day in our Gulf Coast growing region of Texas to Friday night football games, there's no denying that fall is in the air after a long summer. While fall induces thoughts of tailgate parties and hot cocoa, it's also a very important time for gardeners who are ending another successful growing season. Here are a few "what-NOT-to-do" as well as a few "what-to-do-now" tips for making the transition into fall easy on gardeners and their plants.

What NOT to do in November and December could mean gardeners get a rest and their plants would fare better as well. Here's a "what-NOT-to-do" checklist and a few what-to-do-now tips.

Now is NOT the time to perform major pruning on trees and shrubs. This may keep nurseries busy selling replacement plants next spring; pruning woody plants like those out-of-control climbing rose bushes may stimulate new growth during our typically very mild fall season in the Texas Gulf Coast growing region. Should a cold snap occur, such tender new growth is more susceptible to freeze injury, killing not only the new growth but possibly the entire plant. In our area we usually prune our roses around Valentine's Day.

I can't pass up the opportunity to caution against severely pruning/cutting crape myrtles. Learn the proper pruning methods by entering "Crape Myrtles YouTube" as search terms in your favorite search engine.

Now is NOT the time to prune spring-blooming shrubs such as azaleas and gardenias. Prune them in the spring after the flowers have faded. Azaleas, gardenias and many other spring blooming shrubs have already set next year's buds. The time to prune and fertilize is after they finish blooming.

The safest times to prune non-spring bloomers are in the dead of winter, when the plants are dormant, or in early spring when they display the very first signs of new growth (swelling of buds). Never remove more than a third of any plant when pruning unless you know it is the right thing to do. I can think of one example, the butterfly bush (*Buddleia*). I cut mine to the ground in the spring to control its rampant growth. Right now it is over seven feet tall and beautiful, until the first freeze. Another example would be *Plumbago*. Master Gardener Sandra Devall notes in her article, on page 13, in January she will prune back her *Plumbago* plants to about four inches which produces more blooms on the new growth.

The only pruning we should do now is during the garden clean up; prune out any dead and diseased plant parts (dead and diseased plant parts can be pruned out any time of the year). Don't put diseased plant debris from your garden clean-up in your compost pile. Bag it and trash it. Disease-causing plant pathogens may not be killed in your compost bin unless "hot composting" is achieved. I know the weather is nice, you can see exactly what needs to be done, and you want to prune now but you know the benefits of knowledge over passion. I hope I have given you the wisdom to know why you should not prune now.

Please DO NOT waste or dispose of those fallen leaves in household trash pick-up. Shred them with your mower and use them for mulch in your beds to recycle nutrients and add organic matter to your soil. In my garden, I place several layers of newspaper as a weed barrier on top of the leaves, then a layer of mulch for winter protection, weed prevention, and overall aesthetics.

DO NOT apply excessive mulch around trees. Mulch is a good thing if used correctly. Mulching helps to control weeds, insulate soil from temperature extremes, and

helps to reduce moisture loss in the soil. Moderation is the secret to mulching around trees. DO NOT cover the natural flare of the tree trunk by piling mulch high against the trunk; this practice is referred to as "volcano mulching." Volcano mulching allows insects to bore into the tree and puts moisture against the tree trunk, promoting disease.

DO NOT fertilize the lawn, trees, or shrubs! Fertilizing can stimulate new growth in the Gulf Coast growing region. As previously mentioned, new growth and cold weather aren't compatible.

DO NOT put your water hose away even though we have had an unusually wet fall season thus far. Keep watering your plants and grass should extended periods of dry weather occur over the winter season. If a cold snap is forecasted, water landscape plants thoroughly around the root zone (a plant's drip line) before the onset of freezing temperatures. Since it is extremely rare for the ground to freeze along the Texas Upper Gulf Coast growing region, watering is one of the best ways to keep plants safe during colder weather.

DO NOT leave container-grown plants abandoned in the landscape. Exposure to cold temperatures can injure the roots of various types of potted plants. Move them closer to protected areas so that you don't have that back breaking chore with a freeze on the way. Keep up your container plant maintenance without the fertilizer and have protective covers ready. I heard a suggestion to use Christmas lights for warmth.

I tried it, and the lights made a pretty display under my freeze cloths; I'm not sure they put out much warmth, but everything survived. DO NOT use tarps or plastic to protect plants from freeze damage, use "frost covers," sheets, and blankets.

Enough of the "DO NOT's." DO plant perennials and trees to allow them to establish strong root systems during the winter. DO plant bulbs like daffodils, crocus, iris and hyacinths for spring color. DO plant cold hardy annuals such as pansies, cyclamen, snapdragons and dianthus. It is an ideal time to divide perennials and plant perennial seeds. DO plant bluebonnet seeds (by mid-November).

DO spend some time building or repairing raised beds or constructing box frames to prepare for the next season. DO till the soil in vegetable beds for the site to ready for planting when spring arrives.

DO get a soil sample test from AgriLife Extension's Soil, Water and Forage Testing Laboratory (<http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/>) and be ready to take action in the spring. Contact your county Extension Office for questions on how to take a proper soil sample.

DO find a Christmas Tree Farm (www.TexasChristmasTrees.com) and cut your own tree. It could be a great experience for the whole family and your tree will be fresher.

DO have a Happy Thanksgiving, DO have a very Merry Christmas, and DO have a prolific gardening New Year!



Have protective covers ready



Grocery Store Miniature Rose Study

by John Jons
MG 2003

While back I got a question from a resident of Galveston County who enquired, “Will the little roses that are sold in small pots at several local grocery stores grow in our area [in southern Texas below Interstate 10 and in Harris and Galveston Counties]?” My response to the question was that I was not really sure, as I had not tried to grow these particular roses in our area. This made me think that maybe I should try to grow some of these “grocery store miniature roses” to objectively determine if they would or would not grow in our area?

These “grocery store miniature roses” are mass-produced greenhouse grown plants that are grown in very controlled conditions, and are simply intended to be a disposal plant, i.e., after the blooms are finished you dispose of them, like cut flowers.

In May of 2013, I was provided with an opportunity to grow some of these grocery store miniature roses when I noticed that a local grocery store had a large number of what appeared to be neglected grocery store miniature roses on sale for \$1.00 each (see Photo 1). These are the typical roses that you normally see being sold for about \$6.00 each. These grocery store miniature roses were in 4-inch pots. They did not have variety name tags. Upon closer examination I noticed that these miniature rose bushes

consisted of three small rose plants of the same variety in each pot. The bloom colors were pink, red and white (see Photo 2 and Photo 3). They had hybrid tea type miniature blooms with the exception of the pink rose that formed a rosette type rose flower with 60+ petals.

I sorted through all the roses on sale and purchased twenty of these grocery store miniature roses. I took them home, repotted them in larger pots and spent about a month nurturing them back to good health. Five of the roses died. I contacted the miniature rose grower in Ontario, Canada, to try to identify the variety name of each of these roses but because I could only identify the rose by color, the grower’s representative was not able to provide me the specific names of the roses.

Research Process: So I designed a simple research process to determine how well these “no name” grocery store miniature roses would grow in our area. I divided the plants into two groups.

Group 1: Low Maintenance Care—the “average local homeowner gardener protocol.” The plants (the grocery store miniature roses) were planted and maintained in a garden bed and provided basic plant maintenance, such as watering and maybe fertilizing—which is typically low maintenance care. The Group 1 roses would be planted in the Galveston County Master

Gardener Demonstration Garden in Car-bide Park, where all the rose plants received “low maintenance care.” Ten plants were selected. Nine of the roses were red and one was pink (see Photo 4).

Group 2: High Maintenance Care—the “plant-specific, knowledgeable gardener protocol.” The plants (the grocery store miniature roses) would receive the type of care that could be provided by a gardener who is very knowledgeable about the particular plant and who knows how to provide the plant with required “optimal care”—which would be considered high maintenance care. Typical high maintenance care may include regular, and as necessary, insecticide and fungicide spray applications, with the appropriate application of needed fertilizers, irrigation and pruning. The Group 2 plants were planted in my home garden, where I could provide the “high maintenance care.” Five plants were selected—as this was what I had space for in my garden. Three roses were red, one was pink and one was white (see Photo 5).

These grocery store miniature roses were grown and evaluated for three years.

The study was started in April of 2013 and concluded in August of 2015 due to the high mortality rate of the roses in Group 1. See Table 1 for study data and see the notes for additional information.



Continued on Page 11

miniature rose study continued the results are in

Table 1. Performance of Miniature Roses Under Low Maintenance and High Maintenance Regimes

Date	Blooms				Height (Inches)		Notes for Group 1 (Low Maintenance)	Notes for Group 2 (High Maintenance)	
	Group 1		Group 2		Group 1	Group 2			
	No. of Plants	Number of Blooms ¹	No. of Plants	Number of Blooms ¹	Range of Growth ²	Range of Growth ²			
2013	May	10	0	5	0	7"	7"	All the roses were very healthy.	All the roses were very healthy.
2013	July	10	4 - 23	5	12 - 26	7" - 11"	9" - 12"	Minimal to no insect or fungal impact	All the roses were very healthy. Very minor to no insect or fungal impact.
2013	Oct	10	1 - 6	5	21 - 41	7" - 14"	10" - 15"	Minimal insect or fungal impact	
2014	May	9	1 - 10	5	18 - 46	4" - 14"	13" - 18"	Minimal insect or fungal impact. One rose died due to cane dieback.	
2014	July	7	0 - 8	5	32 - 51	4" - 14"	14" - 21"	Minimal insect or fungal impact. Two roses died due to cane dieback.	
2014	Oct	6	0 - 1	5	28 - 43	3" - 13"	16" - 24"	Minimal insect or fungal impact. One rose died due to cane dieback.	
2015	May	4	0 - 2	5	24 - 52	1" - 4"	18" - 26"	Minimal insect or fungal impact. Two roses died due to cane dieback.	
2015	July	3	0 - 2	5	48 - 61	1" - 6"	26"	Minimal insect or fungal impact. One rose died due to cane dieback.	

¹Range of number of blooms per plant.

²Range in growth measured by height (in inches) of test plants.

Summary Notes:

Group 1: These roses with "low maintenance care" performed very well for the first year. In the second year, the combination of a very hot summer and periods of heavy rain seemed to negatively impact the health of the roses, resulting in a low bloom production, slow cane growth, and plant mortality primarily caused by cane dieback. There was some minor insect and fungal problems. At the conclusion of the study, it was noted that the pink rose with 60+ petals did seem to be healthier than the red roses and continued to grow but not very well. The remaining two red roses appeared to be in decline.

Group 2: These roses with typical "high maintenance (rose) care" turned out to be vigorous, colorful and very floriferous miniature roses. All five roses are surviving and there appears to be no variation among the different colors (varieties) in rose health, bloom and growth performance.

Overall Summary: If you provide "high maintenance care," these grocery store miniature roses will grow very well in our geographical area. If you provide only "low maintenance care," these roses typically may not do well in our area. However, due to the wide variation of rose varieties, I do suspect that there may be some varieties of the grocery store miniature roses that with the right garden conditions may grow and survive with "low maintenance care" in our area.

Notes:

This study does not account for the variation in the different grocery store miniature rose varieties in this study as we were unable to determine the variety names. When Group 2's roses were in full bloom, it was difficult to accurately count all the rose blooms.

The minimal insect or fungal impact on Group 1 may also be attributed to them being planted in an open and all day full sun location.

Some of the dieback in Group 1 may have been attributed to the irrigation system that was managed on a weekly basis in the Demonstration Garden in contrast to the daily management of roses grown in my home garden. The bacterial cause of the dieback was not identified but it appeared to be typical of the dieback observed in (all) roses in our area that may be attributable to either heat or water stress.

Pruning: The roses were not deadheaded or pruned Group 1. The roses in Group 2 were deadheaded and maintenance pruned after they exceeded 26" in height. The growth width of the roses was not noted as the roses in Group 2 were maintenance pruned to avoid them growing into each other.

testimonials from master gardeners

Editor's Note: After John Jons submitted his study on miniature roses to the Newsletter Team, two Newsletter Team members wrote about their experience on growing miniature roses in their home gardens.

It was Valentine's Day and I was delighted to receive a petite/miniature red rose as a birthday gift. My friend had purchased it from Kroger. It was growing in a very very small pot and did not even have a variety name. I put it in a 6-inch pot in rose bed mix and gave it a little fertilizer. Who knew it would grow branches and want to climb. Five years later, it lives happily in a large pot on our deck, in morning sun. Its continual blooms are my friend remembered. (See Photo 6 on previous page) . . . MG Kaye Corey (Class of 2001)

My three miniature roses, purchased from a Kroger grocery store, were in bloom in my landscape before Hurricane Ike made landfall on September 13, 2008. Hurricane Ike washed my Kroger mini-roses away, blooms and all. Never had to prune, never had to feed, they grew under out Norfolk Pine and Travelers palm. They were such a delight as we drove up the driveway. The colors were red, pink, and yellow. The most interesting of all the leaves never turned yellow in winter, summer, spring, or fall . . . MG Elayne Kouzounis (Class of 1998)

MG Best Shots



Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*) by MG Tabatha Holt



Periwinkles (*Vinca* sp.) by GCMG Digital Library



Canna (*Canna x genralis*) by CGMG Digital Library



Plumbago (*Plumbago auriculata*) by GCMG Digital Library



Chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum x morifolium* syn: *Dendranthema x grandiflorum*) by GCMG Digital Library



Cassia (*Cassia bicapsularis*) by GCMG Digital Library

...and Narrative



By Sandra Devall
MG 1998

Fall Colors in the Upper Gulf Coast

Fall color in our Texas Upper Gulf Coast growing region is not famous for spectacular displays of fall foliage among our trees. Our trade off for this seasonal attribute in more northern landscapes is that our winter seasons are typically mild and subtropical. While in most years most of our landscape tree may forego colorful changes as the fall season progresses, our landscapes can still be full of color in November and December when you consider the number of plants that have color because they bloom throughout our mild winters.

Taking a drive around your community can identify plants that will help you enjoy the many months of cool outdoor times. To test that hypothesis, I took a drive around my neighborhood in early November to see what was blooming. The number of plants blooming filled gardens with an explosion of colors! I was overwhelmed that most annuals, perennials, vines and a few trees were still blooming including American Beautyberry, Vitex, Canna, Ageratum, Begonias, Dahlberg Daisy, Chrysanthemum, Penta, Periwinkles, Golden Raintree, Cassia, Crinum, Roses, Petunia, Canna, Plumbago, Firespike, Chenille, Oleander, Goldenrod, Passion Vine, Esperanza, Hummingbird Bush, Shrimp Plant, and Cuphea.

Now came the hard part, making a short list of six plants. “My Chosen Six” have a lot in common. They are plants that don’t freeze in our mild winters plus some which bloom through December. Other unique characteristics are included in their description. “My Chosen Six” are as follows:

Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*). Pentas are 1-2 feet tall and have a two-inch cluster of star flowers. And what a color selection: white, red, pink, purple and variegated. They are treated as annuals by northern gardeners but we can treat them as perennials in our growing region due to mild winters. A freeze will kill them, which may occur every three or four years. Since they are not ‘woody,’ they are easy to propagate or pass-a-long. When we have a freeze for a day or two, you can cut them back and cover the area with mulch or leaves and they will do fine (i.e., they are root hardy).

You will see them often used in subdivision entrance areas because of the hardiness and color. Sad to say, some landscapers dig them up at the end of the summer and throw them away, but as ‘smart’ gardeners we can enjoy them for many seasons.

Periwinkles (*Vinca sp.*). Periwinkles are an excellent edging or border plant. As with many perennials, the original plant color has been modified to produce a large selection of color. Their original color was lavender, so lavender periwinkles will stay for many years. Their long blooming season is from June to November and they will keep their foliage in the colder months.

Canna (*Canna x generalis*). Cannas are grown from rhizomes which you will find for sale in nurseries and gardener centers in very late winter. Cannas are easy to grow from rhizomes, but you can also purchase plants over the summer. They can be left in the ground in our zone. As the photo shows, a group of variegated cannas in front other plants that die back in the winter are a beautiful combination all year round. They are good filler plants for areas of your beds which have newer shrubs that have not grown to their full size. Their main source of color is in the new varieties of variegated cannas.

Plumbago (*Plumbago auriculata*). Whether it is summer or fall, it is hard to pass up the beauty of plumbago cascading down a wall or planter. The photo was taken during the late fall. The plumbago loves full sun, doesn’t even notice dry months and will give you color till the end of fall. They are another plant that requires little winter care. The plant usually dies back in December, but if they are planted among other plants, the bed will look fine until they come back in the spring. Trim down all but about four inches in January which will give you more blooms on the new growth.

Chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum x morifolium* syn: *Dendranthema x grandiflorum*). A lot of people like to put out the beautiful pots of Chrysanthemum, commonly referred to as garden chrysanthemums and garden mums. These are easy to find in nursery and grocery stores and they do add a vibrant splash of fall-like color to any yard. I enjoy seeing them. The problem is that the burst of color from them is a one season pleasure. The chrysanthemum in our photos is a daisy-shaped bloom that begins as a white flower and turns to lilac color and the weather begins to turn as you can see on the photo. If you want a chrysanthemum that will multiply each year and bloom during most of the winter—this is the one you want.

Cassia (*Cassia bicapsularis*). There are two Cassia trees that are frequently seen in this area. The common one is *Cassia fistula*. The *Cassia fistula* has dark-yellow flowers and has a height of ten feet or taller. In fact, we have shown it in a previous article. This cassia called “the butter cream cassia” is a good description of its flowers. It grows with multi-trunks more like a large shrub. The soft yellow blooms fill the shrub into our winter months. This not only gives us beauty, but gives any slow moving birds and bees a great feeding station.



Gardening with an Artistic Endeavor Meet a Master Gardener

Kaye Corey

By Susan Meads-Leahy
MG 2014

Kaye Corey is a whirlwind, and I happened to jump aboard for a bit to get some great information to share with you all about her! Her family lived in a home on the island that was built in 1897 and, while she grew up in Galveston, she wasn't actually born on the island.

Kaye retired from UTMB and then became a Master Gardener in 2001 in Harris County. She moved "south" and transferred to our Galveston County Master Gardener group—boy, aren't we lucky she did! I just have to say I have never met anyone that was retired and is as busy as Kaye! In addition to providing leadership to a Junior Master Gardener group in Friendswood, she is an active member of Keep Friendswood Beautiful, Heritage Gardeners (who fund and sponsor Heritage Junior Master Gardeners), a member of Beta Sigma Phi, a Volunteer at Shriners Hospital for Children in Houston, a member of the Friendswood Methodist Church, on the Landscape Committee and Secretary for her Homeowner's Association... WHEW, right?

Kaye is a retired art teacher, teaching hospitalized children at UTMB, public and private schools. Her love of children and her God-given talent and patience to work with them led her to become the leader of the Heritage Junior Master Gardener program, which is modeled after the Texas Master Gardener program through Texas A&M AgriLife and often referred to as "JMG Kids." She currently has 15 kids in her JMG group whose ages range from 6-to-13 years old.

The majority of children in her JMG Group are home-schooled and Kaye will not allow any child to join the group if the parents aren't on board as well (and yes that means they have to attend all monthly meetings). Over the past 18 years, Kaye has seen 32 of her kids earn certification as a Junior Master Gardener. This process takes approximately 3 years to accomplish. It is obvious when speaking with Kaye about the JMG Kids program how much "to heart"

she takes her responsibility in leading this group. You can almost feel the love she has for her kids and the dedication she has to this program.

Not only does she teach in this program the same curriculum as the adults receive who become Master Gardeners, she has also integrated community involvement as a very important element of the JMG Kids. They work their own flower beds in Friendswood's Stevenson Park, they volunteer with "Keep Friendswood Beautiful" at the city's annual Tree Give Away and Arbor Day Celebration. Additionally, the Kids man their lemonade and homemade cookie stand at the Garden's annual spring garden tour. The JMG Kids have had a stand for years and it is to teach them to meet and serve the public while learning to make change. This year they have produced bay leaf recipes with the bay leaves in a card to sell at the Heritage Gardeners Christmas Bazaar and Tour held on November 21 and 22. They have elected a Treasurer to handle their money. The President opens their meetings and leads the pledges. The Secretary keeps all their records. Kay said she now has a new GCMG assistant, Linda Osburn, to help her with the JMG Kids.

I had to ask her how she teaches a class for 6-to-13 year-olds, and she said she adapts the curriculum to each age and ability level. During craft/gardening activities parents and older kids help the younger children. She said the parents are learning along with their children. She also said the younger children bring an element of surprise for the older kids.

The JMG kids go on educational field trips. Under the chapter in the JMG handbook on water conservation, Kaye takes the group to visit a local wastewater treatment plant. These kids enter judged flower shows in both design and horticulture each year as part of their program. They are awarded ribbons in the Youth Division of the shows and have been invited by the Alvin Garden Club to enter their flower show in 2016.

Kaye has been invited to talk to scouts and



Kaye in a "teaching moment" with her Junior Master Gardener group in Friendswood

in classrooms about gardening, and she is more than happy to help anyone interested in beginning a JMG Program. She also writes for this award-winning newsletter!

Currently Kaye works as a Landscape Design Consultant through AgriLife Extension and Texas Garden Clubs. In 2014, Kaye received a National Garden Clubs Commendation and in 2011 she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Galveston County Master Gardener Association.

Don't miss the opportunity to get to know Kaye. She is a lovely person and has a true dedication to our Galveston County Master Gardener Program.



Two Junior Master Gardeners

we now measure the harvested "wet" weight

Growing Hops in Galveston County

Editor's Note: This is the third article in a series and continues from the article with the same name published in the preceding newsletter.



*by John Jons
MG 2003*

Reminder: In our ongoing efforts to anticipate the potential horticultural needs of our Galveston County residents, we noted the increase in home beer brewing activities and that local and national beer brewing supply stores sell Hop rhizomes (Cascade, Centennial, Chinook, Crystal, Golding, Mt. Hood, Northern Brewer, Perle, Sorachi Ace, Sterling, Tettnanger, Willamette & Zeus) each year at the end of March; therefore, we decided to investigate if hops could be easily grown in Galveston County. In April 2015, we planned to grow the four hop varieties of Nugget, Chinook, Columbus and Cascade. As a result of the initial low rainfall in mid-summer, we extended the irrigation system from the vines to the hops.

Growth: Starting in July, about the time we started to enjoy the summer heat, the growth of the hop bines (twining vines) on all four varieties (Cascade, Columbus, Chinook and Nugget) seemed to slow down and almost stop growing.

Production: All four of the hop varieties were producing "cones," which are the flowers that are used in making products. Nugget was the last variety to produce cones and did not produce them till mid-August. Initially, we counted the cones (that were over 3/8" long) on each variety but we realized that possibly a better way of counting the Hop production was by weighing the actual cones produced and harvested from each plant (variety). This harvested weight will be the "wet" weight, as the cones have to be dried before they can be used. It appears that the cones lose 80-90% of their wet weight when they are dried, so from here on we will just measure the harvested "wet" weight of the hop cones and continue to record the growth of the bines.

Notes: Some of the bines on Chinook died back due to (presumed) too much (irrigation) water.

General Observations (to date): Our southern Texas sun and the heat does appear to have an impact on the hops. The impact seems to slow the bine growth and/or stop bine growth, but the Hops still produce cones. The cones seem to be impacted by the direct sunlight's heat as some cones in full sun quickly dry out and turn brown, which renders them useless, as the cones have to be green when they are harvested. It was also noted that the Hop varieties and bines that were inadvertently provided some shade by the nearby pergola and the vines seem to benefit from this shade.

Variety		Date 8/21/2015
Cascade	Total Length of Bine (feet)	16
	Total Weight of Cones (Ounces)	5
Columbus	Total Length of Bine (feet)	10
	Total Weight of Cones (Ounces)	4
Chinook	Total Length of Bine (feet)	9
	Total Weight of Cones (Ounces)	12
Nugget	Total Length of Bine (feet)	9
	Total Weight of Cones (Ounces)	1



Photo by John Jons



By Elayne Kouzounis
MG 1998

an excellent potash fertilizer

Herb of the Month . . . Comfrey

The name comfrey was derived from a Latin word that translates as “knitting together.”

Over the ages comfrey also has been known as: Healing Herb, Boneset, Bruisewort, and Knitbone. All these common names contain a clue to its therapeutic use. One of the main therapeutic substances in comfrey is the allantoin-rich comfrey root which some references cite as beneficially affecting cell multiplication, wounds, burns, and bone ailments. An anti-inflammatory that perks up the immune system, speeds wound healing, and encourages new skin and cell growth and is now synthesized for use in healing creams, Comfrey also contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids which have been shown to cause liver damage and tumors in laboratory animals—and as a result is now banned in the form of tablets and capsules in several countries.

It is *S. officinale*, or common comfrey, that is most valued for its healing properties.

Comfrey is a native of Europe and Asia, but has been introduced all over the world. It is a very hardy plant and has been known to withstand temperatures below freezing (less than 32° F).

Comfrey is an attractive herb from the same family as borage.

The plant grows 2-to-3 feet tall with basal leaves that are up to a foot long, elliptical, and of deep, rich green color, and are covered with fine, rough hairs, which makes them somewhat prickly and can cause skin irritation.

From the clump of leaves at the plant's base, rises a single stalk with smaller leaves, growing on stems that clasp the stalk. Atop this stalk grows the flower racemes (flowers that are evenly spaced along a central stem with the ones at the base opening first). They curve over in a shape reminiscent of forget-me-nots, a close relative of comfrey. These flower stalks often contain seeds, flowers, and buds all at the same time. The flowers are either purple or cream colored and appear from May until the end of summer. Comfrey roots are about 1-inch-thick and a foot or more long, with a black exterior and white interior. They grow just beneath the soil surface as spreading rhizomes and are somewhat fibrous, fleshy, juicy, and mucilaginous (a sticky substance secreted by certain plants).

The entire comfrey plant is valuable for its use in breaking down compost, and as a mulch. There are three main types of comfrey: common comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) native to Europe, central Asia, and western Siberia. Prickly comfrey (*Symphytum asperrimum*) which is native to Russia. Quaker, Russian, or Blue comfrey (*Symphytum x uplandicum*) is a spontaneous hybrid of common and Prickly Comfrey, native to the Caucasus (a mountain range following the boundary between Georgia and Russia), between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. *Symphytum officinale* and *Symphytum x uplandicum* are grown as perennial fodder crops (dried food, hay, etc.) for horses and farm animals and as a source of high nitrogen mulches, compost material, and fertilizer for organic cultivation. Comfrey will survive in almost any soil but prefers a loose, rich, loamy soil with a pH between 6.0 to 7.0.

The name comfrey comes from the botanical name which is Greek in origin. Sympho means “combined together;” phyto means “plant,” referring to the long-established skin and bone-healing properties of



Photo by Elayne Kouzounis

Botanical Name: *Symphytum officinale*

the plant. The *Symphytum* genus consists of 25-35 species of bristly or hairy rhizomatous perennials. Comfrey is an important medicine and ointment. With many valuable properties, it has the power to soothe inflammation of any sort.

Comfrey is invasive and deep-rooted, and difficult to eradicate once established. Plants may also, be affected by rust (a fungal disease). To control its spread, Comfrey should be grown in large containers and removed from other garden sites. The leaves are picked in early summer before flowering and dried for infusions, liquid extracts, and poultices (a soft-heated mass applied to an inflamed area of the skin for laying on cuts, bruises, boils, sprains and swellings, they can also help heal broken bones). Roots are lifted during dormancy and dried for decoctions, liquid extracts, and ointments. The root is considered demulcent, mildly astringent, anti-irritant, and cooling. The easiest way to propagate this vigorous plant is from root cuttings. A piece of root almost any size, placed in a suitable soil and watered adequately will produce a comfrey plant. The main concern in growing comfrey is not how to grow it, but how to keep this perennial from spreading.

But be careful, the bristly foliage is a skin irritant. Rich in nutrients, comfrey once figured prominently in herbal medicine but is now a suspected carcinogen (a cancer-producing substance) and is only recommended for external use. Add dried and crumpled leaves to a bath as a skin softener. Steep leaves for a liquid fertilizer or add to the compost heap.

Comfrey is an excellent potash fertilizer that also contains calcium, potassium, phosphorus, and trace minerals.

To brew a general fertilizer with extra potash, pack chopped comfrey into a container, cover with water, add a lid (it will smell dreadful) and soak for 4 weeks. Use the liquid fertilizer as needed by diluting 20:1 with water. It is especially good for tomatoes, potatoes, and houseplants.

Enjoy your garden—it is always nice to learn more about herbs.

AgriLife Extension Disclaimer: The information in this article is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment. If you have a health concern or condition, consult your family physician or medical doctor. Always consult a medical doctor before modifying your diet, using any new product, drug, or supplement.

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 newspaper).



By Donna J. Ward
MG 1996

Don't ya just love the 'crunch' of acorns under foot? That sounds tells me cooler weather has arrived and the heat and mosquitos are a thing of the past—well almost. When we arrived in Texas from the Midwest many years ago, I was amazed by the fact that I could pick roses on Christmas Day, and be bitten by mosquitos while doing so!

Fall is one of the most enjoyable seasons in Texas, especially when it comes to gardening. This may be the year you want to make some major changes to your landscape. Maybe some plants have outgrown their spot, or some haven't performed as well as planned. First step is to get a good gardening book written for the Texas Gulf Coast. Those 'generalized' publications are useless for this area. Next step is to determine just what type of exposure your plants will have—sun, shade, partial sun or partial shade. Here's a guideline to help you make that determination.

In summer when the sun is most intense between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.,

Light shade is 2 or 3 hours without direct sunlight on the plant, or a slight pattern of shade during all of this time frame such as shows through open trees.

Partial shade is 4 to 5 hours without direct sunlight on the plant, or a dappled pattern of sun and shade within this time frame (such as under a tree whose leaves allow sunlight to filter through all day in a changing pattern).

Full shade is all day shade, with only indirect or reflected light – no direct sunlight.

Dense or deep shade is very little indirect or reflected light and absolutely no direct sunlight.

When you get to the nursery you'll notice that each plant (hopefully) is tagged. A good grower's tag will tell you the plant's eventual

size, its best sun or shade exposure, and quite often include a photograph of an optimum specimen. Fall is an ideal time to put in more landscape trees and shrubs. They can spend the next few months establishing a strong root system before spring makes demands for blooms or top growth. After you have made your choices, all that is left to do is get out the shovel.

I know we don't want to talk about it, but fall clean up needs to be done before cold weather arrives. Creepy-crawlies are checking out the real estate for a place to spend the winter. Get rid of all vegetative debris that will give the critters a place to hide. Rake up the dead annuals; put them and those fallen leaves into the compost pile along with veggie kitchen scraps. Toss on a handful of garden soil, a light sprinkle of any granular fertilizer and keep it moderately damp. You are turning it at least weekly—right?

Remember that tulip and hyacinth bulbs need at least 6 weeks of refrigerator chill time before you plant them between Christmas and New Years Day. Toss them into a paper bag, but don't put them into the crisper drawer. Some fruits give off ethylene gas that will cause the bulbs to rot.

If you're planning to add a bit of spring color to your surroundings, think about putting in seeds of sweet peas, snapdragons, calendula and poppies.

You might have noticed that some of your perennials didn't bloom up to your expectations last time around. It could be that they need to be divided, or moved to a spot that gives them a more optimum sun/shade location. Trim away the dead foliage, separate large root systems or rhizomes and give them a new place to live.

Look out for falling acorns.....

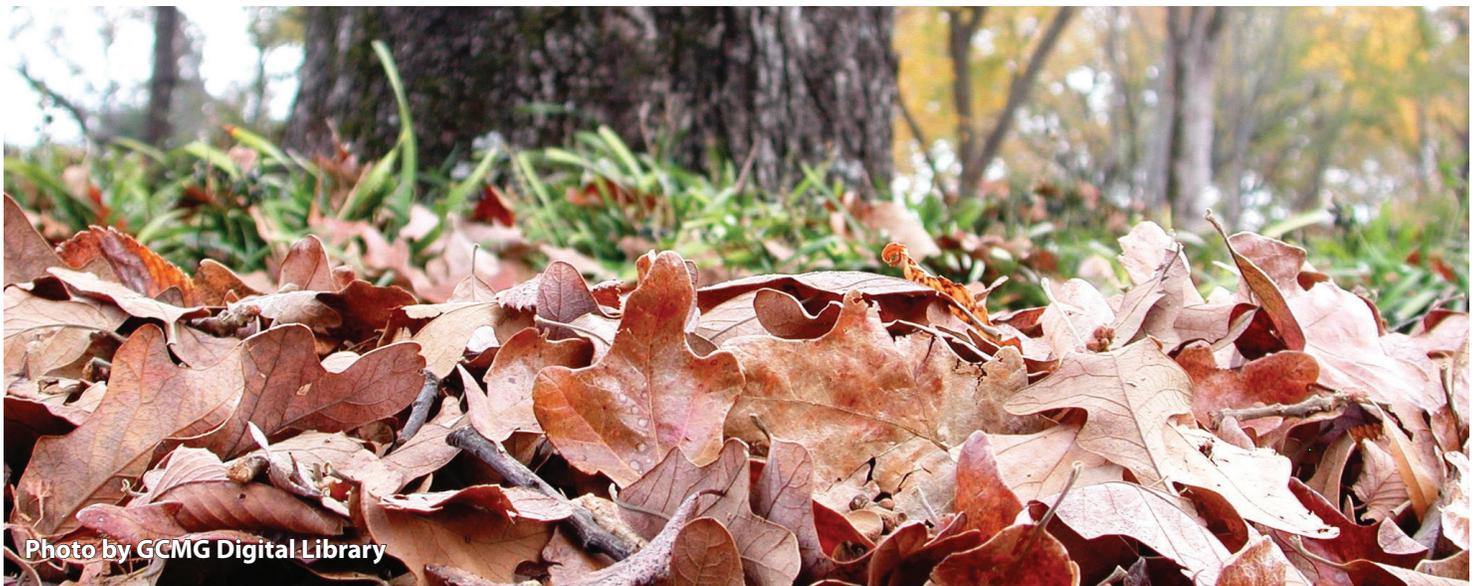


Photo by GCMG Digital Library



By Barbara Markey
MG 2013

the language of garden tools

Tool Primer



By Henry Harrison
MG 2011



A word about the importance of gloves, an important accessory in the garden. They are essential and help with chores, a never-ending task for landscapes. Wear gloves when you perform outdoor tasks to protect hands, as they shield from thorns, rough surfaces and tool impact.

Education is beneficial, when it provides needed knowledge about gardening tools. Information makes digging less tedious, and serves a practical purpose, such as saving one from sore back muscles, a nuisance to every gardener.

Use the correct tool for the job. Information should be studied, then implemented in your routines. Good technique and guidance change a bad day into a good one.

Shovels have a broad, flat front and a D handle, which aids your grip and control. Blades are made from a sheet steel, but can also be made of hard plastic. When shopping for a shovel, pay particular attention to the shovel's steps. The steps are the areas where you place your feet when digging. You want to get a shovel that has rounded, padded, broad or hefty steps. These steps, which are on the left and right hand sides of the blade, are important for comfort. The more expensive shovels have great steps; cheap shovels have flimsy or almost no steps. If you dig a few hours, with a shovel that does not have ample steps, you can ruin the bottoms of a good pair of shoes, and your feet will be hurting at day's end. Shovels are used to transfer materials, like dirt, sand and the like. They are considered a hand tool and used mainly for agricultural purposes.

The length of the handle is vital to a great performance by the user. Shovel handles are shorter in length. Be a careful shopper; locate one to fit your body type, and purchase one with good ergonomic fit. If used all day, purchase one correct for you and the designated chore.

Big Box stores carry a consumer grade shovel for occasional use. Infrequent users, this may be the tool for you. Best practice is to think about the jobs you do before you make a decision. The rule of thumb is to shop, then buy the best you can afford.

Spades are a type of shovel. The end is pointed and sharp; used primarily for digging. When dull, you can sharpen with a small, hand mill file, coarse/bastard cut, for metal tools.

Sharp shooters come with long handles, ball or D type, and used to open deep holes, break up soil in concentrated areas and jobs requiring depth.

Trenching shovels have a long, angled handle connected to a sharp pointed blades to dig deeply for trenching or drainage projects, like sprinkler systems.

Correct storage of tools is key to maintaining long life. Clean blade after each use, then apply linseed oil to handles. Good habits give extended life to your tool collection.

Thought for the day: "You can bury a lot of troubles by digging in the dirt." Author unknown.

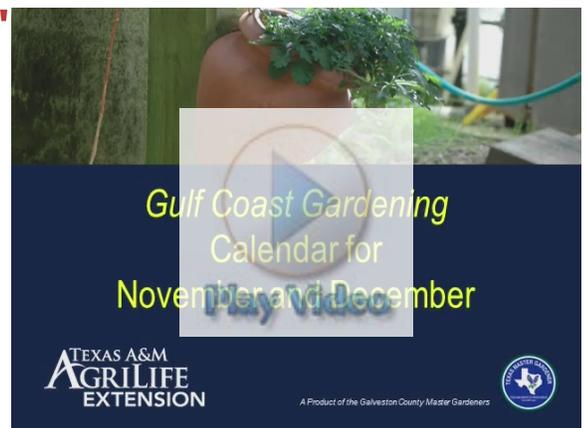
November-December "Things To Do" Gardening Calendar Video



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.

Project: Demonstration Gardens

Carbide Park



By Tom Fountain
MG 2008



Photos by Tom Fountain

We had our fairly typical summer with average temperatures. However, the on again off again periods of heavy rains with cooler temperatures trimmed the garden production of produce slightly. Despite this strange weather, our garden has produced over fifteen hundred pounds of food for local food pantries so far. Good work Master Gardeners! Now it's time to get that good fall-to-winter garden going. The holidays are just around the corner, and we have had a few cold fronts push into the area. Many of our beds have been made ready for cooler temperatures and some planted with select winter vegetable plants



I have been writing about the greenhouse construction for the past year. In July, the first greenhouse experiments were started. We have had some success and a few problems, but most importantly, we have learned. Our greenhouse team members really worked hard to meet the fall sale deadline. Alice, Bill, Clarence, Deborah, Glen, Keith, Lisa, Sharon, and Stewart did a great job, but they aren't the only ones. I might add our new Interns have really pitched in and are a real blessing. Thanks!



We have a lot of unsung heroes working on projects around the garden. One of these is Henry. If you don't recognize his name, well it's the guy with the big hat and lots of tools. Usually, he doesn't say much other than "we can" or "I will." Then he's back in a flash with whatever you wanted and some times more, adding "you also might want to use this." Like the saying goes "there is nothing like fresh vegetables from the garden." That is unless it's cake and ice-cream in celebration of someone's birthday.

Any of you MGs who want to come out on a Thursday and do a little work, come on out. Besides working in the garden, we always have a good time and there is a lot to learn. Happy gardening!

Did I mention there was a wedding in the garden!



by Sandra Gervais
MG 2011

looking at kale in a different light

Seasonal Bites

We have so many good cooks from so many backgrounds that choosing the recipes to include in the newsletter is the hard part. It's a lovely problem to have! We try to pick recipes that use whatever the gardens are producing at the moment or something that fits the season. The first, from Doris Heard (class of 1990), is for all of us who aren't too fond of kale though it grows in abundance here. When you stop laughing, it will make you look at kale in a slightly different light.

DO YOU MASSAGE YOUR KALE?

Last month a group of ladies had just finished eating their salads at a restaurant when one lady commented, "Too bad they didn't massage their kale." I thought she was joking until I went home, watched a YouTube video on how to massage kale and tried it. Wow, what a difference it makes for a kale salad! Even my husband will eat it now.

You can check out the demonstration videos yourself, but briefly this is what I do to create a delicious kale salad:

Peel the tough stems away from the leaves and discard. Tear the leaves into edible pieces. Wash thoroughly and spin dry.

Place in a bowl with a small amount of olive oil and begin massaging the leaves with your fingers. This only takes a minute or two before you can feel the difference. Add a little fresh lemon juice, salt and pepper to taste.

Use this massaged kale to build a salad to your liking. Some of my suggestions:

- Toasted Nuts - almond slivers, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, or pumpkin seeds
- Dried Fruit - cherries, blueberries or any of the flavored Crasins
- Fresh Fruit - small chunks of mango, apple, cantaloupe, or strawberries
- Cheese - use a peeler to add shaved pieces of cheese. My favorite is Manchego cheese.

I'm sure you have other favorite items from the garden to add. The good news is this salad will hold in the refrigerator for at least a day. Experiment and enjoy!

The second is from Julie Cartmill (Class of 2007), who has found a way to make chocolate even more addictive than ever. Her "Brickel" also makes a lovely homemade gift for the holidays.

BRICKEL

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 40 saltine crackers | Dash of vanilla |
| 1 cup brown sugar | 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips |
| 1 cup butter | 2 cups milk chocolate chips |
| 1 1/2 cups pecans, chopped or pieces | |

Spray rimmed cookie sheet lightly with Pam. Cover with crackers, sides touching.

Melt butter and brown sugar together until well-blended in pan.

Add vanilla carefully since mixture tends to boil up.

Add pecans and cook for another 2 minutes.

Spoon this mixture over crackers.

Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes.

Remove from oven and sprinkle all of the chocolate chips over the top.

Return to oven for 1-2 minutes until chocolate chips are soft.

Remove from oven and use back of a spoon to spread melted chocolate over all.

Cool in refrigerator before cutting into pieces on diagonal.

Remove from pan.

Note: Sometimes hitting the bottom of the pan on the counter top helps to loosen the melted bits.

Freezes well, or so I'm told. It never lasts very long with us.



Photo by Ken Steblein

MINUTES - SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 2015 MONTHLY MG MEETINGS

September's Master Gardener monthly meeting took place at the Extension Office at Carbide Park. It was all about preparing for the Annual Fall Plant Sale. This sale is a huge effort involving many Galveston County Master Gardeners serving in a volunteer capacity. Thank you all for your service and participation!

There are, however a number of folks that need special recognition for their time in this event. A big thank you goes out to John Jons for speaking at the monthly meeting on the many varieties of plants to be offered at this sale. He also gave the presentation to the public on the day of the sale (October 10). Another thank you is extended to Ann Anderson for coordinating the sale's many volunteers that make the event possible. Tish Reustle is coordinating the MG Home Grown plant booth. All MG-grown plants will be inspected by Dr. Johnson prior to the sale. Thank you Tish and Dr. Johnson! Thank you Connia Webb for organizing the Master Gardener Crafts. Having a craft area is a first for this plant sale. Finally, thank you, MG President Ira Gervais for service, commitment and for keeping us moving forward.

The Master Gardener Backyard meeting for October was held at the beautiful Galveston Island home of Helen and James Bashline. Most unique to their garden is a Living Tree Sculpture gracing the front yard. Paths then led guests around to a shaded side yard and back patio where tables covered in white tablecloths and lit candles greeted Master Gardeners for an evening of fun and conversation. Thank you, Helen and James for opening your home to us and making the gathering so special.

President Ira Gervais also gave an update of the MGFall Plant Sale that 80% of the plants had been sold.



By Cindy Croft
MG 2009



Photos by Cindy Croft

Backyard in Bashline home



By Frank W. Jackson
MG 2006

A WALKWAY OF HONOR AND MEMORIES what is it? why is it? how did it happen?

In the July/August 2015 issue of this *Gulf Coast Gardening* magazine, Master Gardener Anna Wygrys provided a brief and very informative history on the development of our MG Demonstration Garden located in Carbide Park, from County Commissioners Court approval in 2006 to the construction of the pergola in the garden.

In the fall of 2006, discussions occurred regarding the visitor's entrance. The decision to create a brick walkway from the entrance to the pergola, circle that structure and extend to the east was made. The reasons were: 1.) to improve the entrance appearance; 2.) to comply with public accessibility standards set forth in the American Disabilities Act; and 3.) to help generate funds for other garden projects.

I agreed to coordinate the activity. Ann Baugh (MG Class of 2006) and Roney McCrary (MG Class of 2007) were asked to be team leaders. They recruited MGs from previous classes to serve as class captains. Their task was to follow up the letter campaign to all Master Gardeners and encourage them to purchase an engraved brick for the walkway. In 2006, each member of our County Commissioners Court purchased a brick which was placed near the front entrance of the walkway.

Meanwhile, another team of hard-working Master Gardeners removed the grass, spread sand, and leveled and compacted the base material for the bricks. Working over several weeks, the team of guys that did all the prep work included Jim Edwards, Clyde Holt, Wes Ruzek, Lester Wygrys, Joe Fisher, Dick Carter, Wayne Elliott, Jack Vanderlip, Kenneth Deslattes, and Chuck Myers. My apologies to anyone I omitted.



Photo by Jim Ammons

A walkway of honor and memories from the entrance to the pergola at the MG Demonstration Gardens in Carbide Park

The first bricks were installed in 2008 and we are three-fourths of the way done. Since then many MGs have provided bricks in memory of family and friends or in honor of others. Some provided bricks for pets or slogans.

Beginning in 2012, Master Gardener class member bricks have been installed together on the east side of the pergola. Also, some garden clubs, businesses and friends of MGs have participated in the project.

As the group replaced blank bricks, the replaced ones are saved to extend the walkway of honor and memories in north and south directions from the pergola.

For information on how to place an order, please contact Ginger Benson by e-mail (GALV3@wt.net) or by telephone (281-534-3413, ext. 5065).

Gulf Coast Gardening Educational Seminars

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

HERBS FOR THE GARDEN

Saturday, November 15, 2015

1:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.

This program is presented by Galveston County Master Gardener Cindy Croft. Cindy's program on herbs discusses herbs that work well for the Gulf Coast Garden including growing tips, lore, propagation and uses. The audience is encouraged to share their experiences and participate in the discussion.

HOMEOWNERS FAQ'S ON CITRUS

Thursday, November 19, 2015

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

A PowerPoint presentation by Monte L. Nesbitt, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Program Specialist, will provide answers to the most commonly asked questions on growing citrus in the home landscape. He will also provide an update on Citrus Greening in Texas. He will also cover the topics of citrus variety selection and establishment, production, and pest problems.

GROWING TOMATOES FROM SEED

Saturday, December 12, 2015

9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Some of the best tomatoes are the ones you grow yourself. In order to have transplants to plant out in February, you need to get started now. Learn about growing tomatoes from seed from Master Gardener Ira Gervais. Discussion topics include how to pick the best varieties, where to obtain seeds, planting and growing techniques, and insect and disease control.

WHAT IS A GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER?

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Interested in learning more about the Master Gardener Program? ... Interested in becoming a Master Gardener?... Interested in the various programs offered by the Galveston County Master Gardeners? Then the following program is for you. Dr. William Johnson along with a panel of Master Gardeners will provide a forum-style presentation discussing the many facets of this volunteer program and how you can become a Master Gardener.

2015 MG Re-certification (Continuing Education) Hours Available Through the AgriLife Extension Office

Date	Name of Program	Speaker	MGs
1/6/2015	Grafting Your Own Fruit Trees	Herman Auer	1.50
1/10/2015	Growing Avocado and Papaya	Jerry Hurlbert	2.75
1/10/2015	Successfully Growing Peaches in Galveston County	Herman Auer	2.00
1/15/2015	How to Graft Fruit Trees - a hands on workshop	Herman Auer	1.25
1/17/2015	Growing Citrus in Your Own Backyard	Chris Anastas	2.00
1/17/2015	Citrus Greening	Robert Marshall	0.75
1/20/2015	Gardening by the Square Foot	John Jons	1.50
1/24/2015	Successful Spring Vegetable Gardening	Luke Stripling	2.75
1/24/2015	The Real Dirt on Garden Soil	Bob McPherson	2.00
1/27/2015	Anyone Can Grow Roses	John Jons	1.75
1/29/2015	How to Graft Fruit Trees - a hands on workshop	Herman Auer	2.00
1/31/2015	Grow Great Tomatoes	Ira Gervais	2.50
1/31/2015	Growing Blueberries	Dr. David Cohen	1.75
2/3/2015	Fruit Trees & Spring Vegetables for the Gulf Coast	John Jons	1.00
2/17/2015	February MGA Meeting - Demonstration Garden Requirements	Bobbie Ivey	1.00
2/19/2015	Rose Pruning - a hands on workshop	John Jons	1.50
2/19/2015	How to Graft Fruit Trees - a hands on workshop	Herman Auer	1.50
2/21/2015	Texas Tuff Landscape Plants	Sandra Devall	2.25
2/21/2015	Kitchen Gardening	Mary Demeny	2.25
2/24/2015	The ABCs of Composting	Ken Steblein	1.75
2/26/2015	How to Graft Fruit Trees - a hands on workshop	Sue Jeffco	2.00
3/3/2015	Gardening for Jewels - Hummingbirds	Deborah Repasz	1.50
3/17/2015	Honey Bees Around the Garden	Stewart McAdoo, Robert Marshall	1.50
3/19/2015	Peach Thinning - a hands on workshop	Herman Auer	2.00
3/21/2015	The Culture & Care of Palms	O.J. Miller	2.25
3/21/2015	Tomato Stress Management	Ira Gervais	2.00
3/24/2015	75 Ways to Live a Greener Life	Ken Steblein	1.50
3/26/2015	Peach Thinning - a hands on workshop	Herman Auer, Robert Marshall	1.00
3/31/2015	Tool Talk	Tim Jahnke, Henry Harrison III	1.50
5/19/2015	Beneficials in the Garden	Dr. William M. Johnson	1.50
6/4/2015	Peach & Plum Pruning - a hands on workshop	Herman Auer, Sue Jeffco	1.00
6/6/2015	The Fabulous Fragrant Frangipani (Plumeria)	Loretta Osteen	1.75
6/6/2015	The Culture & Care of Palms	O.J. Miller	2.25
6/11/2015	MG Greenhouse Team Training Videos	Online Training	1.00
7/14/2015	Accessible Gardening	Brack Collier	1.00
7/25/2015	A Homeowner's Guide to Weed Control	Anna Wygers	2.50
7/30/2015	Twany (Raspberry) Crazy Ant: Management Guidelines for Homeowners	Robert Puckett, Paul Nester	2.50
8/1/2015	Backyard Gardening Series- Strawberries	Robert Marshall	1.50
8/8/2015	The Great Pepper Extravaganzo - Seminar & Tasting	Gene Speller	2.75
8/22/2015	The Patio Garden	Thomas LeRoy	2.75
8/29/2015	Successful Fall Gardening	Luke Stripling	2.75
9/15/2015	Gardening by the Square Foot	John Jons	1.50
9/19/2015	Growing Garlic and Onion	Ken Steblein	2.25
9/19/2015	Kitchen Gardening	Mary Demeny	2.25
10/3/2015	Gardening For Jewels...Hummingbirds	Deborah Repasz	2.00
10/3/2015	Texas Tuff Plants	Sandra Devall	1.50
10/6/2015	The ABCs of Composting	Ken Steblein	2.00
10/17/2015	Buried Treasures	Anna Wygers	2.00
10/20/2015	The Joy of Daylilies	Nell Shimek	1.75
10/24/2015	Tool Talk Workshop	Tim Jahnke & Henry Harrison III	2.50

2015 Recertification Hours for MGs

Total CEUs (Hours)

92.00

Last Updated: 22 October 2015

Reminder: In order to maintain your status as a certified Texas Master Gardener, each year you must complete a minimum of 6 hours continuing education, as well as 12 service hours. Additionally, those hours must be reported through the online Volunteer Management System or other means. Contact MG Wayne Elliott at mghours@wt.net for more information.

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-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 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@sbcglobal.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.

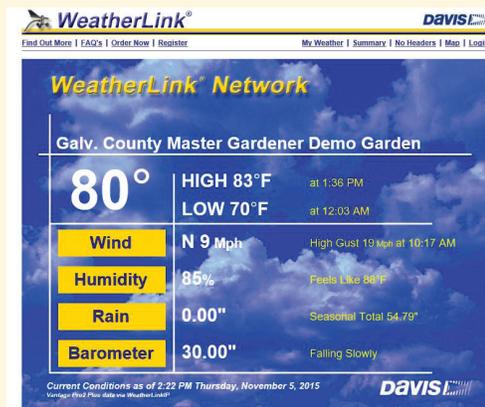
SPECIALIST & OTHER MG RELATED TRAINING

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.

Master Gardener On-Line Training

Did you know that there is Earth-Kind® On-Line Master Gardener Training. It is designed to provide information on a variety of environmentally friendly (Earth-Kind®) practices for use in the home landscape and garden. Texas Master Gardeners can select from any of these on-line modules to obtain up to 3 hours of re-certification education credits in a calendar year. Each module is worth 1 hour of credit. Progress through the training program is tracked "on-line" and the results for each completed module are automatically forwarded to your county Master Gardener Coordinator. Follow the link to get started.

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/training/>



Don't forget to put the link for our weather station on your smart phone and computer: <http://www.weatherlink.com/user/gcmga>



Here is a great way to support our GCMGA

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

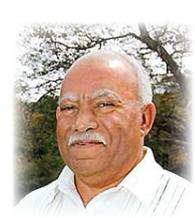
All you have to do is:

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 . . .

FALL IS IDEAL FOR PLANTING TREES

(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*

The spring season is typically seen by most people as the time for new growth in the home landscape leading them to think of planting trees in the landscape during that time. However, fall is the ideal season for planting trees (as well as shrubs and other assorted plants) in the Upper Gulf Coast region of Texas.

Many people prefer January through March for planting landscape trees but the fall months of October through December have distinct advantages. Fall planting follows the heat of summer before a cool winter season, and trees planted in the fall utilize this time period to their advantage.

Tree roots grow anytime the soil temperature is 40 degrees or higher, which occurs throughout most (if not all) of the winter season in our region of Texas. When spring arrives, a well-established root system can better support the energy demands of emerging leaves.

My close friends know of my fondness of quoting adages, proverbial phrases and other short statements of wisdom or advice. As a horticulturist, I find the following quote by Nelson Henderson to be germane to this week's column: "The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit."

On Saturday, Oct. 10, 21 Galveston County 4-H youth and parents met with members of Galveston County Master Gardener Association to plant an oak tree near the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park in La Marque. This was part of an annual One Day 4-H Service Project.

It wasn't just any tree though, as it has a specific meaning. The Texas A&M Forest Service provided one Bur Oak tree to each county in Texas so it may be planted by youth from local 4-H clubs "...in some notable public venue where it can be seen and appreciated by those in the community."

The tree provided is commonly known as Bur Oak (botanical name: *Quercus macrocarpa*) and it is native to north central Texas. Bur Oak is one of few trees that can grow successfully in all 254 counties of Texas.

This year's One Day 4-H Service Project was designed to help celebrate the Texas A&M Forest Service's centennial anniversary. For 100 years, the service has been helping protect and save the lives of Texans through its many efforts. Personnel with Texas A&M Forest Service provided pivotal support in assessing damage caused by Hurricane Ike in 2008 to Galveston Island's urban tree forest.

While its massive size counts this tree out for most urban and suburban yards, the Bur Oak is a great choice for parks, institutional grounds and expansive yards. A mature Bur Oak can be expected to grow 60 to 70 feet in height and width and is very drought resistant. The Bur Oak has the largest acorns of all oaks native to Texas; they are distinguished by very deep fringed cups. The common name (sometimes spelled Burr) describes the cup of the acorn, which slightly resembles the spiny bur of a chestnut.

The Texas State Champion Bur Oak is located in Plano in Tarrant County. Plano's oldest Bur Oak is 90 feet tall, 186 inches in circumference and has a crown spread of 80 feet. This tree was designated as a Bicentennial Tree in 1987 and was recognized as growing in Plano at same time the U.S. Constitution was signed, Sept. 17, 1787. That would mean that Plano's Bur Oak was already more than 30 years old at the time of the signing. The Bur Oak, as with many oaks, is a very long-lived tree. The average life span is between 200 and 400 years. The oldest known Bur Oak, on record, lived for 402 years.

What guidelines did I give to the 4-H youth who planted the Bur Oak? I reminded them that the greatest cause of death of newly planted trees is planting the root ball too deep. My advice was to

plant the tree's root ball slightly above (1-to-2 inches) the level of the surrounding soil to allow for settling and increased soil drainage. Dig a hole large enough in diameter so that the root ball has at least 6-to-12 inches of clearance on all sides before backfilling the planting hole.

This allows the feeder roots to more easily grow out into the looser topsoil. Use the same soil that was dug out to create the planting hole to backfill the planting hole. Then make sure that the area is mulched with 3-4 inches of shredded pine bark mulch. Water the planting hole thoroughly to get rid of air pockets in the back fill surrounding the root ball.

I digress to my opening quotation by Nelson Henderson regarding planting trees. While I suspect that some of the youngest 4-H youth did not fully comprehend the generational impact of planting the Bur Oak, I also suspect that some will return to visit the tree as they reach adulthood. (I asked one 9-year-old how old she would be when this oak is 200 years old? She promptly replied that she would be 209 years old.)

I further suspect that some of these 4-H youth will return with their children to the planting site to sit in the shade of a tree that they might not have expected to sit. I even suspect that some of their grandchildren and great grandchildren might do the same.



Photo by Dr. William M. Johnson

Fall is tree planting season

On Saturday, Oct. 10, 2015 Galveston County 4-H youth and parents met with members of Galveston County Master Gardener Association to plant a Bur Oak tree near the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park in La Marque. This activity was part of an annual One Day 4-H Service Project.

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 15, 2015 NOTE CHANGE IN DATE

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

December

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE IN DATE: Save this date for a special holiday celebration, Tuesday, December 15 at 6:30 p.m. The Galveston County Master Gardener's Annual Holiday Party will be held at the home of Mikey and Allen Isbell. If you choose, you can bring an unwrapped child's toy for a donation. Bring a generic gardening gift to participate in the holiday gift exchange. More details to be revealed.



We Want Your Feedback

FEEDBACK



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