



# HOE! HOE! HOE!

Grimes County Master Gardeners Newsletter



## VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2, FEBRUARY 2009

President: Alvie Vesperman, Vice-President: Donna Hebert  
Secretary: Julia Cosgrove, Treasurer: John Milligan  
AgriLife Extension Agent: Rodney Finch Secretary: Barbara Szymczak  
[www.grimesmastergardeners.org](http://www.grimesmastergardeners.org)

### EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES & FUN FEB/MAR 2009

Feb 03 #2 Class—Soils - Sam Feagley  
Feb 10 #3 Class—Botany - Jayla Fry  
Feb 10 GCMG Regular Meeting—1.30 p.m. Go Texan—Birding-Jim Anding, Brazos Co. Audubon  
Feb 17 #4 Class— Entomology - Carlos Bogran  
Feb 21—GCMG Spring Landscape & Planting Seminar  
Feb 24 #5 Class—Lawns/Turf David Chalmers  
Mar 03 #6 Class - Fruits & Nuts - Tom LeRoy  
Mar 10 #7 Class—Landscaping - Ann DeLeon  
Mar 10 GCMG Regular Meeting—1.30 p.m. Go Texan—program TBA  
Mar 17 #8 Class—Propagation - instructor(s) TBA  
Mar 24 #9 Class—Rainwater Harvesting Stuckey's - 9442 FM244, Anderson  
Mar 31 #10 Class—Herbs - Ann Wheeler

All training classes are 8.30—12.30 at the Go Texan Building, Grimes Co. Expo Center (Fairgrounds)  
except where noted

### GRIMES COUNTY FAIR 2009

June 5—12

It is time to start planning your entries for the County Fair. If you are entering plants, (container, hanging basket, succulents, etc.) they must have been in your possession for ninety days prior to the Fair, so you have a month to think about it and make preparations. Schedules and entry forms will be available at the Grimes County AgriLife Extension Office closer to the time. You can also enter vegetables, fruits, jams, jellies, pickles, baked goods, paintings, knitting, and many other classes - the County Fair is not only for the kids, although it remains a major source of income for their scholarships and future education. Non-kids can enter the “Open” or “Golden” categories, depending on age, and it’s a fun thing to do!

Please send in your articles, photos, and other information by the 27th of the month to  
[hortiq@embarqmail.com](mailto:hortiq@embarqmail.com)

## MEETING SCHEDULE 2009

Regular meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month at the Go Texan Building 9.00 a.m. except as noted below. Other meetings are held in the evening at members' homes and on Saturdays. Whenever weather permits, work time at the various beds at the Fairgrounds will take place before or after meetings held at Go Texan. Bring a brown bag lunch!

**February 12 GoTexan Building 1.30 Speaker : Jim Anding, Birder & Member of Brazos Co. Audubon Society**

**March 10 Go Texan Building 1.30 Speaker : TBA**

Did you know :

In the ancient Saxon calendar, February was the month of the cabbage. Pliny the Elder recorded no less than 87 cabbage related medicines, although the general view of vegetables in the 1700s and 1800s was that basically they were not to be trusted. It wasn't until the 1800s that the British Admiralty began dosing its sailors with lemon juice to counter scurvy. However they began using the cheaper and less effective limes from the Colonies; because of this the Americans started referring to British sailors as "limey".

Info from "Spade, Skirret and Parsnip" by Bill Laws.

JANUARY NOTES



We now have a storage shed behind the Go Texan building at the fairgrounds!

At the January meeting, the following were announced as officers/chairpersons. This is your "Go To" List :

### Officers:

President: Alvie Vesperman  
V-President: Donna Hebert  
Secretary: Julia Cosgrove  
Treasurer: John Milligan

### Committees:

Admin : Carolyn Guillotte  
Awards: Vicki Gergeni/Pam Schneider/Mary Cadro  
Childrens: Jennifer Corzine—Ag Day  
Sandy Robillard—Treats on the Street  
Class 2010: Jennifer Corzine  
Communications: (Newsletter/Website) Helen Quinn  
Co-Op: Fred Vesperman  
County Fair Judging: Mary Cadro  
Farmers Market liaison : Helen Quinn  
Fundraising : TBA  
Painting Texas with Wildflowers: Doris Myers  
Projects (Landscaping) :  
Flagpole bed: Kelley McKenney  
Go Texan beds: Donna Hebert/Jennifer Corzine  
Extension beds: John Milligan/Julia Cosgrove  
Scholarship: TBA  
Spring 2010 Seminar: Sandy Robillard  
TMGA Directors: Helen Quinn, & Sandra Stuckey  
Alternates: Sandra Williams, & xxxx

### **2009 Training class has started!**

**A big welcome to Emily, Barbara, Carol, Gay Lynne, Henry, Hayley, Sydnee, Kendall, Amber, John, Juan, Kyle, Eddie, Kenneth, Kathy, and Linda.**

**We hope you enjoy the classes, and wish you Happy (Master) Gardening!!**



SPRING PLANTING & LANDSCAPE SEMINAR  
February 21st at The Navasota Center

Twenty-one days to go! There are still plenty of opportunities to sign up to help, which earns volunteer hours! Contact Sandra Stuckey 936-873-2181 sandrastuckey@hughes.net, or Sandy Robillard 936-894-3155 intothewoods@mssblue.net. There will also be sign-up sheets at the classes, and the February 10th meeting. Sandra will also be holding another card-making session at her house on February 4th - the cards these members are making are awesome! Please contact Sharon Murry 936-873-2576 sharonatmurry@gmail.com with the list of plants you are bringing for the plant sale so she can make the information tags. Don't leave this until the last minute .... she will need time to prepare these tags. Get your cookie, cake, and "snack" recipes out, go to the grocery store and get baking! Refreshments at last year's seminar earned rave reviews on the evaluation sheets!

Helpers do not pay the registration fee, and are welcome to audit the presentations at times when their duties permit. All helpers will need to pay for their own lunch; Sandra/Sandy will need numbers. Be sure to check your email regularly—you won't want to miss any information regarding this exciting event!!

REMINDER OF CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan 27 Intro/Xeriscaping : Jayla Fry  
Feb 03 Soils : Sam Feagley  
Feb 10 Botany : Jayla Fry  
Feb 17 Entomology : Carlos Bogran  
Feb 24 Lawns/Turfgrass : David Chalmers  
Mar 03 Fruit & Nuts : Tom Leroy  
Mar 10 Landscaping : Ann DeLeon  
Mar 17 Propagation : TBA  
Mar 24 Rainwater Harvesting : Bob Stuckey  
Mar 31 Herbs : Ann Wheeler  
Apr 07 Vegetables : Joe Novak  
Apr 14 Plant Disease : Carlos Bogran  
Apr 21 Communications - Rodney Finch  
Open Forum - MG speakers  
CELEBRATION LUNCH!!!

Recap of the audit rules:

Master Gardeners can audit the classes free of charge and earn Continuing Education hours. Auxiliary members, and members of the Public, can audit individual classes for a fee of \$10 per person per class.

February Vegetable Planting Guide

Asparagus—through 3/15  
Beets—through 5/1  
Broccoli—through 3/5  
Cabbage (American & Chinese) through 3/10  
Carrots—through 3/5  
Garlic—through 3/15  
Swiss Chard—through 4/20  
Kale & Kohlrabi—through 3/10  
Head & Leaf Lettuce- through 3/20  
Mustard—through 4/15  
Spinach— through 2/20  
Turnips—through 4/20  
Onions—through 2/5 (better hurry up!!)  
English peas -through 2/20  
Edible Pod peas- through 3/5  
Radish—through 5/5  
Irish Potato- 2/5-3/15\*

Surprise harvest 1/24/09 from very late fall planting early October 2008 (should have been planted end August!!)



Quote for February sent in by our "U.K. Connection" - yes, this newsletter goes world-wide!

"Treat this garden as a personal vision of Paradise - and only include those elements with which you wish to spend eternity"

Chris Beardshaw, Award Winning (UK) Garden Designer & TV Presenter.  
Check out his website at [www.chrisbeardshaw.com](http://www.chrisbeardshaw.com)

## On the Wild Side

### Fungus farmers

Retirement provides me the opportunity to spend inordinate amounts of time watching the wildlife if I wish. And I do. One afternoon I noticed a series of two-inch wide lines of bare soil meandering through the yard. On closer inspection I found a little army of ants carrying plant material from shrubs to a hole in the ground. There was a series of trails radiating from hole to hole and hole to plant—the ants' food corridor. I watched the activity for several days and wondered how many little ant feet it took, day after day, to wear these packed down trails through the grass and weeds. Scores of ants were coming and going, without hesitation, each on its own mission.

I continued to take note of the ant activities and looked for more information. This particular ant is *Atta texana*. It is also known by descriptive common names such as parasol ant, leaf cutter ant and town ant. I noticed with irritation, one group harvesting chunks of my daylily's foliage. Before long the entire plant looked like it had a haircut! Another day's "ant watch" found them cutting up rose leaves, another day pyracantha berries and so on. It appeared that the ants rotated through the yard focusing on one type of plant at a time.

A little more research told me these ants are farmers as well as foragers. They carry the plant material deep into their underground dwellings. The material is processed by another group of specialist ants and the resulting material is used to feed a particular fungus which is perpetually harvested for food. A colony may be spread over an acre of land and the underground tunnels can go fifteen to twenty feet deep. The tunnel structures are complex and include a very effective air circulation system.

I was impressed with the industrious and purposeful activity of these ants. Nonetheless, I did not want to see my cultivars destroyed. Because of the complexity of the colony, as well as the feeding habits, they are difficult to control. They do not take most baits because their food is the fungus which they produce. Individual plants can be protected by using contact insecticides, but this would require frequent reapplication. Certain fumigants are somewhat effective, but must be used with extreme caution, particularly near water. Treating the mounds also has limited effectiveness. My own lack of expertise in managing highly toxic chemicals meant that I'd have to live with these pesty, if interesting creatures and wait for a more natural control to arrive.

For more aggressive tactics and additional information, look for publication UC-033, **TEXAS LEAF CUTTING ANT**, B. M. Drees, J. V. Robinson and A. N. Sparks, Jr. Extension Entomologists, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, or go to [http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/ants/leaf\\_cutting.cfm](http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/ants/leaf_cutting.cfm)  
<http://insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide/cimg353.htm>  
<http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Ent-1029.html>



Sandra Williams