



HOE! HOE! HOE!

Grimes County Master Gardeners Newsletter



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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES & FUN APR/MAY 2009

Apr 7 #11 Class-Vegetables—Dr. Joe Novak-at TAMU Hort. Building/Holistic Garden
Apr 14 #12 Class-Plant Disease-Dr. Carlos Bogran
Apr 14 GCMG Regular Meeting-Field Trip to Arbor Gate
Apr 21 #13 FINAL Class-Communications-Rodney Finch, Open Forum-GCMG-Celebration lunch
Apr 23,24,25- TMGA Conference, Marshall, Texas
May 12-GCMG Regular Meeting- TBA
May 16-Probable Grand Re-Opening of the Farmers' Market

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

The above is just a selection of events available in April and May, including seminars and plant sales, and
does not include events at commercial businesses.

Carefree Sunshine Rose

If you want to try a yellow rose you should look at the Carefree Sunshine Rose. It is an introduction from the breeder of the award winning Knock Out rose. It is available as a bush and it's size is approximately 3.5' x 3'. You can also find it as a climbing rose. My particular one cannot decide if it is a bush or a climbing rose. I have one shoot that grows up to the eaves of the garage every year. The blooms are bright yellow single blooms that appear starting in March and bloom into October. The blooms are non-fading and stand up well even in the hottest Texas summers. Its resistance to disease is comparable to the Knock Out rose.

Peggy Sloan



Please send in your articles, photos, and other information by the 27th of the month to
hortiq@embarqmail.com

MEETING SCHEDULE 2009

Regular meetings are held on the 2nd 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!

- April 14 Field Trip to Arbor Gate, Tomball. 2.00 pm. Details TBA
May Tentative – Field Trip to the Matt Family Orchard near Tomball
June Tentative – Evening Meeting – volunteer host contact Donna

MARCH NOTES

March must be the busiest month for plant sales, seminars and other gardening activities. There are so many things to do that it is hard to find time to do our own gardens! How tempting it is to buy plants, take them home, only to find we have nowhere to put them. Trainees and helpers at our Propagation Class went home with lots of cuttings, and learned about seeds, and all kinds of methods of making new plants. The speaker at our March meeting was John Pitts, who told us all about soil samples and fertilizer recommendations. We actually received some very welcome rainfall in March, and the class learned about rainwater harvesting. The class on herbs, with Ann Wheeler, received the usual rave reviews, and now we have only **three** classes remaining! Several of the trainees have already made a good start in volunteer hours on the road to certification. A “war on weeds” work day at the Go Texan flower beds was held; hopefully the weeds will lose the war, but you know how those weeds are!!!

One of the classes was held at the Stuckeys' home, where we learned about rainwater harvesting. In celebration of the rain, we'll make this the Rainwater Issue! See page 6 for Conference notes and photos.

This fine fellow was spotted by Sandra Williams at the Stuckey residence - meet

The Stuckey Duckey



MAKING RAINWATER CAPTURE CONTAINERS

Part of the class on rainwater harvesting was spent on making 32 gallon capture containers.



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!

FARMERS MARKET

Tentative arrangements are being made to re-open the market on Saturday May 16, at the Cedar Creek Park Pavilion (south end of the Brookshire Bros. parking lot, probably starting at 9.00 a.m. It will go on until 11.00/11.30 or sell-out (or until we get tired.) Please let me know NOW if you think you might be interested in bringing produce, preserves, plants or crafts to sell. I'm not asking for commitment right now, just interest.

Helen

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 : Elliott Head
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.

Vegetable Planting Guide



Chard, Swiss-through 4/20
Lima beans-through 4/10
Mustard-through 4/15
Turnips-through 4/20
Sweet Corn-through 5/5
Radish-through 5/5
Pinto beans-through 5/5
Cucumber-through 6/15
Eggplant-through 6/10
Romaine Lettuce-through 5/31
Melons—through 6/15
Okra-through 6/15
Southern Peas-through 6/15
Peppers-through 6/15
Pumpkins-through 6/15
Summer Squash-through 6/15
Winter Squash-through 6/15

Carrot Coiffure

Dacus carota is the wild carrot of the roadside, best known as Queen Anne's Lace. The cultivated form of carrot is *D. carota var. sativa*, as old as the ancients. Parkinson said fashionable ladies wore carrot leaves in their hair in place of feathers in his time. Nicholas Culpeper recommended the seeds "being taken in wine, or boiled in wine and taken, it helpeth conception."

From "Gardener's Latin" by Bill Neal

ASIAN PERSIMMONS by Pam Dearing

Introduced into the United States in the nineteenth century, the Asian Persimmon is the most common commercial persimmon in America. It is fairly easy to grow and adapts well to the southern climate, allowing us to grow many of the nonastringent varieties that would freeze in the north before fruit maturation. Fruit is often about the size of an orange and a deep orange color. Our native American Persimmon is much smaller and must be very ripe and soft before consumption to avoid the well known astringent “pucker”—although the flavor is very good if one is patient. The tree is a nice landscape specimen, with fall color and decorative fruit.

Asian Persimmons are classified by flavor as astringent and nonastringent. Astringent varieties, because of high levels of condensed tannins, should be eaten when fully ripe and soft. They may be cut in half and the flesh scooped out with a spoon, adding cream, lemon juice or a pinch of sugar, if desired. The nonastringent varieties can be eaten fresh when hard and crisp. Whether astringent or nonastringent, the closer the fruit is to tree ripe when picked, the better the quality when ripened in storage.

Persimmons have good disease and pest resistance. They are deep rooted so a thorough, weekly watering is sufficient. Full sunlight is best and they prefer a slightly acidic soil, pH 6.0-6.5. Soil should be well drained and fertile, although they tolerate a heavy clay better than other fruit crops. They are fairly tropical in nature, so they are best grown in zones 8-11. Nitrogen is needed to induce flowering and is generally the most important element for succulent growth and good fruit production. Potassium promotes shoot growth and phosphorous is the least required, enhancing fruit color. A typical lawn fertilizer applied in March, May and August is adequate. Magnesium is important as a deficiency results in stunted plants or blackened leaf tips. Two or three tablespoons Epsom Salt sprinkled around the tree each year will control these problems. Trees are planted during the dormant season and cut back one third to one half of tree height. They are trained on a central leader system.

Persimmons are one of the few fruits that can produce fruit parthenocarpically-- without pollination and devoid of seeds. Many varieties produce only female flowers. Some produce male and female flowers on the same tree. Others produce flowers that are perfect, or hermaphroditic; male and female parts in the same flower. When pollen is present, the tree will normally set fruit and have seeds. Pollination can be valuable because it increases the quality and reduces fruit drop. In addition, many astringent varieties become nonastringent when seeds are present (pollination variant). Each flowering shoot will produce two to four flowers. Thin to one to two fruit per shoot. The fruit with the largest calyx will develop the largest fruit. In addition, the basal flower, that nearest the base of the shoot, will often have the largest calyx and therefore, fruit.

The Asian Fuyu variety is the most widely cultivated persimmon in the world. It is nonastringent, medium sized and shaped like a tomato. Seeds are minimal and the fruit is extremely sweet. It can be eaten over a long period of time. Some people prefer the fully ripe, astringent, Saijo variety. Fruit is small and conical and of high quality, but must be eaten soon after harvest. Many other varieties are available, extending harvest times from September through December.

Persimmons are rich in riboflavin and vitamin C. They also are high in glucose, with a balanced protein profile. They have many culinary uses. In addition to be eating fresh or frozen, they can be dried or used in such things as breads and cookies.



Texas Rainwater Catchment Association (TRCA) State Conference by Sandra Stuckey

Robert and I attended the TRCA State Conference this past weekend, March 19 and 20. It was two full days of sitting in hard chairs and listening to really great speakers talking about all the updated news and information concerning rainwater catchment, field trips, and demonstrations. It was great despite the hard chairs.

“The mission of the TRCA is to provide Texas citizens with credible information and resources on rainwater collection, to promote the advancement of rainwater conservation and to work with state, county and other local governmental units in promoting rainwater catchment.”

As you all know we have our own rainwater harvesting system here at the house. We use it for landscape but it can be used for everything. Of course, if you are going to use it for drinking you have to filter it, but you do not have to put chlorine in it.

We learned so many interesting and important things at the conference. As we all know water is our most precious natural resources, and we all take it for granted. Many of our grandparents and their parents before them harvested rainwater in cisterns so this is not a new idea. Many people think we have an unlimited amount of water but that is not true especially as our population grows. So much of our water is wasted by run off of storm water, over use watering the lawn and landscape, and just plain over use. The water running into streams that take it to the ocean is not going back into the aquifers, which is where we get most of our drinking water, and some of the aquifers are drying up.

We as a nation now have to conserve water, collect rainwater to use, and take measures to get the water into the aquifers. One way we can get the water back into the aquifers is to plant rain gardens to hold the water until it slowly absorbs into the ground, we can stop over use of water in our lawns and landscapes by using native plants and cutting down on turf area, and there are many ways to conserve the use of water in our homes.

Rainwater harvesting is on the upswing because it is necessary. Andrew Liveris said in August of 2008 “Water is the oil of the 21st century.” Many states, counties, and cities are making new laws to cover rainwater harvesting. One of the laws in some places is that all new buildings will collect rainwater to use for landscape and toilets. Some new buildings are building green roofs, which is the planting of plants on the roof to collect the rainwater and to give oxygen back into the air. Also many new buildings are harvesting the condensation of their air conditioners to use for landscape and toilets.

The cost to join the TRCA is \$20.00 a year for individuals and \$75.00 a year for business, but anyone can attend the conference. The website for TRCA is <http://www.texrca.org>.

