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GRIMES COUNTY MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 8, ISSUE IV

IN THIS ISSUE

Officers for 2012

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Texas AgriLife Extension

MG Coordinator: Shane Jennings
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Newsletter

Editor: Nicky Maddams

Article submissions, photos and information due by the 25th of each month

Send to: biplanechik@yahoo.ca

Website: txmg.org/grimes

Email: grimesmastergardeners@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

April 3 – MG Class #7; Speaker – Bart Drees (Entomology)

April 10 – MG Class #8; Speaker – Tom Leroy (Home Fruit and Nut Production)

April 17 – MG Class #9; Speaker – Ann Wheeler (Herbs)

April 19 – Field trip to Huntsville at 9:00am "Phoenix Commotion" built homes

April 24 – MG Class #10; Speaker – Martin Thomas (Landscape Horticulture)

May 1 – MG Class #11; Speaker - Helen Quinn (Propagation)

May 8 – MG Class #12; Speakers - Sharon Murry (Composting) and the Stuckeys (Rainwater Harvesting)

May 15 – Final MG Class #13; Speaker; Shane Jennings (Communications/General) Open discussion program

After the class on May 15th, we will be celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Grimes County Master Gardeners. We will be having a potluck lunch, have a tree-planting ceremony and visits from Navasota city officials. Plan to attend!



What's That Yellow Flower?

This plant is crowding out large swaths of bluebonnets over much of Texas.



Get to Know Your Fellow Master Gardeners!

Visit with Linda Jolly and Michael Brame

Bastard Cabbage

Invasive Weed, not Pretty Flower

"Where can I buy seed for that beautiful yellow wildflower I'm seeing everywhere?" asked a customer at the Wildseed Farm in Fredericksburg where I visited last week.

Sadly this abundant flower we are seeing is in fact an invasive weed commonly known as Bastard Cabbage. It poses a real threat to the intense displays of [Texas bluebonnets](#) throughout wide swaths of the state.

Annual bastard-cabbage is an annual, many-branched, herbaceous plant that grows from 1 to 5 feet or more in height and has a taproot that can become quite large. Leaves are deep green, lobed and wrinkled, and sometimes have a reddish cast. The terminal lobe is larger than the lateral lobes, especially on the basal leaves. Younger leaves growing higher up on the plant are less lobed and more elongated. Annual bastard-cabbage typically flowers from early spring into summer, bearing clusters of small, showy yellow flowers at the tips of its branches, resembling those of broccoli and cabbage. Annual bastard-cabbage can be identified more easily and certainly by its unusually shaped fruit - a two-segmented seed capsule, called a silique. The seed capsule is stalked, with a long beak at the tip, and contains 1-2 seeds. The seeds are oval-shaped, dark brown, smooth, and tiny (about 1/16-inch).

Two subspecies of this plant are recognized: *R. rugosum* ssp. *rugosum* and *R. rugosum* ssp. *orientale*. Annual bastard cabbage is also known as turnip-weed, common giant mustard, ball mustard, wild turnip, wild rape and tall mustard-weed. It is designated a **terrestrial noxious-weed** seed in the state of Texas.

Annual bastard-cabbage is an early successional plant that develops a broad, robust mass of basal leaves, which allows it to successfully out-compete native plant species. In some places, it forms a monoculture (a vegetative cover of mostly



one species)

. Annual bastard-cabbage has long been established on agricultural fields, roadsides, and disturbed lands and is becoming invasive in natural areas such as open forests and along streams.

Native to the Mediterranean region of Northern Africa and Central Europe, the introduction of annual bastard-cabbage into the U.S. is uncertain. It appears to be spreading through contaminated grass seed mixes or mulching materials. Because its seeds are similar in size to those of wheat and rye, weed seed screens may fail to remove it from grass seed mixes.

The best way to get rid of it is to manually remove it, making sure to remove the robust tap root. But even if you do get the tap root, the bastard cabbage can still come back. That's because seeds from previous growth lie in the soil below, ready to sprout and start new plants.

That explains what researchers discover when they experiment with herbicide treatments. The poison does kill the plants, but the seeds in the ground re-sprout and the infestation comes back stronger than ever."

At the Wildflower Center, researchers have had some luck with a more organic approach. They have tried over-sowing the bastard

cabbage field with vast quantities of wildflower seeds. They have discovered that [Indian blanket](#), if there's enough seed out there, can actually compete with bastard cabbage.

Mr. Waitt of the Wildflower Center says "On a scale of 1-to-10, I'm at about 9.5 right now. If we don't do something about this, we're going to have to say goodbye to our Texas wildflowers, including bluebonnets."

"No, we're not going to lose every bluebonnet. I don't think people would ever let that happen in the state of Texas. But I am saying that among all of the invasive plant species problems that we're facing in the state, the bastard cabbage should be up there in the top 10 invasive species we really need to be thinking about how we're going to deal with."

(With information from www.texasinvasives.org and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center).



AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System

April Vegetable Planting Guide

1/20-4/15 – Mustard
 1/15-4/20 – Turnips
 1/25-3/5 - Peas (Edible Pod)
 1/25-5/5 – Radish
 3/10-5/5 - Green Beans
 3/10 –4/10 – Lima Beans
 3/10-5/5 – Pinto Beans
 3/5-5/5 – Sweet Corn
 3/20-6/15 – Cucumber
 3/25–6/10 – Eggplant
 3/20-4/30 – Celery
 2/1-4/20 – Swiss Chard
 3/25-5/21 – Lettuce, Romaine
 1/20-4/15 – Mustard
 1/15-4/20 – Turnips
 4/5-6/15 – Peas, Southern
 4/5-6/15 – Peppers
 1/25-5/5 – Radish
 3/15-6/15 – Squash, Summer & Winter
 3/5-4/20 -Tomatoes

ARBOR DAY



April 27 is ARBOR DAY in Texas. It has been over 135 years since J. Sterling Morton founded Arbor Day. His simple idea of setting aside a special day for tree planting is important now more than ever.

As many as 500 million trees scattered across the Lone Star State have died this year as a result of the unrelenting drought, according to preliminary estimates from Texas Forest Service. This does not even include the number lost due to the devastating wildfires.

Consider planting your own tree on Arbor Day or taking part in one of the events planned for that day. You could grow a pecan tree – the State Tree of Texas!

Cathey Hardeman brought a delicious fresh apple cake to class in March. A number of people have asked for the recipe, so here it is!!

Cathey's Fresh Apple Cake

3 cups flour
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 2 cups sugar
 1 ¼ cups oil
 2 eggs
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 cup sour cream
 3 cups chopped apples
 1 cups nuts (optional)

Mix flour, soda, salt and cinnamon and set aside. Mix rest of ingredients together and add to flour mixture.

Bake at 350 45 to 50 minutes.

2012 Bluebonnet Festival

April 14 & 15

Saturday: 10:00am – 6:00pm
 Sunday: Noon-5:00pm

Every spring thousands of Texans go out on the highways and byways of Texas to view the splendor of wild flower blossoms. Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja* spp), Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Texas Bluebonnets (*Lupinus texensis*) and many other wildflowers dot the landscape from East Texas to the Big Bend, from the Rio Grande Valley to the Panhandle – High Plains. The primary flower; the main flower; the **state flower** of Texas, is the Texas bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*).

The best place to view these springtime beauties is as much a matter civic pride as anything else. The Chambers of Commerce from ever town of any size in the Texas Hill country claim to be the best, producing wild flower tour maps and festivals of all kinds promoting their area as the best of the best examples of Bluebonnet Blossoms.

However there is only one "Official" Bluebonnet Festival in Texas. In Washington

County at the small town of Chappell Hill is the "Bluebonnet Festival of Texas".

This small historic town was founded in 1847 and was a thriving community. It served as a shipping point for cotton and other crops, a financial center and had two small schools of higher learning. A changing post-Civil War economy and the 1867 Yellow Fever epidemic nearly wiped the town out.

Today Chappell Hill has a population of about 600 Texans, 25 Historical Markers and 10 National Register sites, including the Main Street Historical District.

On one April weekend every spring the population of Chappell Hill grows 10 fold, as cow pastures become parking lots and Main Street becomes a vendor's mall of fine crafts and gaudy gee-gaws of every description. Ever wondered where to get a Texas Flag necktie, a wind chime made out of Lone Star beer cans, a pair of Bluebonnet earrings, or a beautiful oil painting featuring the holy trinity of the Texas Hill country: Barns, Barbed Wire and Bluebonnets?

Chappell (Chapel) Hill is located at U.S. Highway 290 and FM 1155, fifty-seven miles northwest of Houston in southeastern Washington County.

On Festival weekend go early. If you are not early and coming out of the Houston area get in the right lane of U.S. Highway 290 at least five miles before the right turn into Chappell Hill. The traffic really stacks up. Rain or shine take an umbrella.

On days other than Festival weekend - don't blink or you'll miss it.

(This information and article used courtesy of www.texasbob.com)



What do you call a Bluebonnet when it is white? This beautiful picture was submitted by Sandra Stuckey, taken on their property.

MEET THE MASTER GARDENERS



LINDA JOLLY

With so many interns on board in 2012, I thought we should introduce everyone, so I have randomly chosen a Master Gardener and an Intern to feature each month in a light-hearted, "get-to-know you" way. I will select two each month. We want to know a few fun facts about you and something you love in or around your garden.

Linda was a good sport, being the guinea pig for this issue.

Where were you born and how long have you lived in Texas?

I was born in Navasota and have lived in Texas all of my life.

Where is the farthest you have traveled from Texas?

Prague, Czech Republic

What is your favorite flower and tree? Do you grow it?

I love all flowers and have a mixture. A redbud tree is my favorite along with crape myrtle. I have many, many crape myrtles but no redbud due to Jennifer and Kathy L refusing to dig one up for me side of the road.

Where is the prettiest garden you have ever been to and what made it so?

My grandmother's garden; and my grandmother made it so!

What is your favorite season?

That is a tie between spring and fall. Spring because everything is coming back to life which reminds me of the resurrection and fall because of the splendor of God's beauty in all the colors of the changing leaves.

Why are you a Master Gardener or Intern? I became a master gardener because of Jennifer and will be forever grateful to her for that. I wanted to do fun things, learn more about gardening and make new friends. Mission accomplished.

When was the last "back to nature" experience you have had?

I have them always. For me, that is walking to the back of the place across the creek. Solitude and refresh my spirit.

What vegetable do you hate?

KALE!!! I can only handle that when I juice.

What do you love the smell of?

Coffee brewing in the morning; lavender and rosemary in my yard; and sweet basil in my garden.

What electronic gadget could you not live without?

My smartphone!!!

What would you say is your garden style? (Country, cottage, formal, sculptural, etc.)

Country because I like a mix of things and "good rust" that I have found on scavenger hunts. Cottage would be my second favorite.



Linda sent in this photo when I asked her to share one of her favorite things things in her yard. Gorgeous white cemetery irises!

Roving Reporters!

Dianna Westmoreland submitted a fascinating discovery she made propagating celery!

Take the end of a stalk of celery (3 inches or so), soak in a bowl of water overnight and then plant with about 1/2-1 inch above ground and it will shoot up quickly! Very easy!

The one on the left is less than a month old and the one on the right is a matter of a couple of days. You can see it is sprouting right up.



While **Janeth Nevill** was out and about, she found a Chinese Fringetree growing with abandon on the side of a road. She took these photos and found the following online at TAMU.

Fringetrees (*Chionanthus* spp)

The genus *Chionanthus* contains two large shrubs/small trees that would certainly add interest to any yard or garden. The White Fringetree also called Grancy Gray-beard (*Chionanthus virginicus*) and the Chinese Fringetree (*Chionanthus retusus*).

The White Fringetree or Grancy Gray-beard is a native to portions of East Texas. In cultivation, it generally grows to heights of 12 – 20' and is often that wide. It blooms in May to early June producing white flowers that have a fine texture and a slight but pleasant fragrance. During the flower-period, the trees will be loaded with clusters of blooms which make for a very attractive display. Around the time of flower, the tree begins to leaf out producing a medium to dark green leaf that is narrow and elliptical in shape and often lustrous in appearance. In addition, a dark blue fruit is produced in August to September. The fruit is an oval-shaped drupe that can be attractive, but is usually diminished by being partially hidden by the foliage. As well as adding some ornamental interest to the fall landscape, the fruit attracts birds which will lend an added dimension to the garden. Though it is native to East Texas, the White Fringetree can be adapted to most of the state.

The Chinese Fringetree is a similar species, but by almost all accounts it is a showier version. It grows to be slightly taller than its native counterpart, ranging between 15–25' tall, and has a beautiful rounded shape. It also flowers in May – June, but the blooms are a purer white and they tend to be larger.



The flower panicles have a very fine texture, which along with the snow white color, yields a more refined plant. In full bloom the trees are completely covered with flowers which are contrasted by leaves that are darker green, more rounded and more lustrous than the White Fringetree.

The Chinese Fringetree also produces a dark blue, drupe fruit, but it ripens a bit later. In this case, the fruit are not hidden by the foliage, but if fruit is desired, a female tree must be planted as males do not produce fruit.



The Chinese species is an excellent choice for a tree that will add interest to a landscape for most of the year. It prefers deep, acid soils, but is highly adaptable and should be considered in most areas of Texas

When searching for plants to add interest to your garden consider the genus *Chionanthus*. Whether you prefer the more subdued White Fringe tree or the more robust Chinese Fringe tree, they are both excellent plants that will enrich most Texas landscapes.

LACEWINGS!

Janeth also shared this story with me last Sunday:

"God gave me the most beautiful gift early this morning as I was working in my little herb and flower garden. I have an old cedar log in my garden that was right behind where I was working and I heard the faintest sound. I turned around to see lacewings hatching from larva and taking flight!"



Beneficial garden insects like the lacewing fly are either green (although sometime appear to give off a blue hue) or brown in color. Other than color distinction, there is little difference with the exception that the brown color of the species is slightly smaller in size.

Lacewing flies are most active at night and can quite often be seen hovering around electric light pole lights or the light on your garden porch. They do not bite or sting and are therefore harmless to people or pets.

Once a lacewing becomes an adult, for the most part their hunting habit for vegetable garden pests is limited. They mostly feed on flower nectar, pollen and honeydew (the sugary waste of aphids and other sap-sucking bugs). However, don't let that mislead you. Prior to reaching adulthood it's the lacewings

juvenile children or larvae that eat the lion's share of aphids, whiteflies, mealy bugs, psyllids, leafhoppers, spider mites, thrips, moth eggs and other soft-bodied insects that invade your vegetable plants. Because aphids are more readily available than other pests, it is no wonder the lacewings larvae are aptly called aphid lions.



A "scary looking" aphid lion

But you got to love them. It's hard to believe this scary ugly looking creature is one of your vegetable plants best friends. If you spot one or many, leave them alone. Remember, they're the "good guys."

The lacewings larvae shed their skin three times over a two week period. Because they don't defecate, they use their body waste to produce silk spun from their tail to make a cocoon. Inside the cocoon, the lacewing larvae will shed their skin a final time and become inactive. About three weeks later, or the following spring, what was once an ugly scary creature will emerge as a beautiful adult lacewing fly.



Information from: <http://www.garden-planting-tips.com/lacewing.html>

LATIN FOR GARDENERS!

Submitted by Helen Quinn

At the Coufal Prater truckload plant sale a customer was interested in buying this plant, which she called “Bleeding Heart”. (Note: this was a friend who knows my annoying ways, not an unknown customer.) It didn’t have a label in the pot, but I explained that I have several red/purple ones at home, planted in the ground, and it was not called “Bleeding Heart”. Of course I had an embarrassing senior moment and couldn’t remember what it was called!



While working in my garden later in the day it came to me – it is a Clerodendron. This brings to mind the importance of learning the botanical (Latin) names because there can be several plants with the same common name. For example, a Butterfly Bush can be a *Buddleia davidii*, or a *Clerodendron ugandense*, not to mention the Butterfly Weed *Asclepias* sp. So, depending on what you really want, you might be surprised what you end up taking home!



This is the most common plant known as Bleeding Heart – *Dicentra spectabilis*. This also comes in reds and purples. Note the difference in foliage. Unfortunately this plant

struggles to thrive in our hot and humid climate, preferring USDA Zones 3 – 8.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If anyone is interested in learning “Gardener’s Latin”, there is a charming little book of that name by Bill Neal, which explores the origins, lore and means of botanical names.

Hey, wait a minute, where is Michael?



Our interview with intern Michael Brame will be featured in May’s newsletter as we had issues with computer communications! Stay tuned!

[The National Gardening Association reminds us that April is National Gardening Month. Celebrate accordingly!](#)

Events of Interest in the Area:

“Weather predictions for the Brazos Valley”

By John Nielsen-Gammon Professor, Department of Atmospheric Sciences, Texas A&M University Texas State Climatologist

When: April 24 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Location: The Brazos Center, 3232 Briarcrest Drive, Bryan, TX, 77802



“Things You Can Do with Roses and Herbs of the Year”

By Robbie Will, Manager of the San Antonio Antique Rose Emporium

When: April 4, 9:30am

Location: The San Antonio Garden Center, 3310 N New Braunfels, at the corner of Funston & New Braunfels by the Botanical Garden.



Residents in the Montgomery County area interested in learning how to protect themselves from wildfire are invited to a town hall meeting next month. The gathering is set for 7 p.m. Thursday, **April 5**, at the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department Training Center, 18215 Buddy Riley Blvd., Magnolia. Representatives from the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department and Texas Forest Service will be on hand to talk about what residents can do to protect their home, property and family from the devastation of wildfire. The subject matter hits close to home for many in the area.

The Riley Road Fire in September 2011 burned almost 20,000 acres in Grimes, Montgomery and Waller counties – destroying 73 homes. At the preparedness workshop, residents will be introduced to the Ready, Set, Go! wildfire action plan. The plan provides checklists for families to work through with each other so there is a clear understanding of what to do when a fire breaks out. More than 80 percent of wildfires in Texas occur within 2 miles of a community.

The wildfire statistics from 2011 are staggering. Almost 4 million acres burned, destroying 3,017 homes. Almost 40,000 homes directly threatened by wildfire were saved through the efforts of local, state and federal fire resources. For more information please visit www.texasfirestorm.org and www.texasfirewise.org.

See you next month!

Keep your hands in the dirt and your nose in the flowers!

Nicky Maddams