



GRIMES COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 8, ISSUE V

Hoe! Hoe! Hoe!

May 2012

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

Send to: biplanechik@yahoo.ca

Website: txmg.org/grimes

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Upcoming Events

May 4 – 8:00am-2:00pm **Junior Ag Day** at the Grimes County Fairgrounds

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

AND

Spring Social at 6:30pm at the home of Janeth & Mike Nevill. Bring your favorite dish. Maps were emailed but will also be available at the May 8th class

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!

June 1-9 - Grimes County State Fair

June 12 - Linda Crum, President of the Texas Bluebird Society

July 10 – Ann DeLeon, Drought Tolerant Plants/Plants that survived the 2011 drought



Is getting dirty good for you?

A bacterium found in soil called Mycobacterium has been found to affect the same neurons as Prozac, offering people a natural lift in mood. This is just one more great reason to get out in the garden and grow your own foods. Just spending time in areas with rich soil will allow you to breath in these great benefits.



Meet Your Fellow Master Gardeners!

Alvie Vesperman, Michael Brame and Kendra Pate

May Planting Guide

1/25-5/5 - Radish
 3/10-5/5 - Green Beans
 3/10-5/5 - Pinto Beans
 3/5-5/5 - Sweet Corn
 3/20-6/15 - Cucumber
 3/25-6/10 - Eggplant
 3/25-5/21 - Lettuce, Romaine
 4/5-6/15 - Melons
 4/5-6/15 - Pumpkins
 4/5-6/15 - Okra
 4/5-6/15 - Peas, Southern
 4/5-6/15 - Peppers
 3/15-6/15 - Squash, Summer & Winter

TENTH STREET FARMERS MARKET

Tenth Street Farmers Market, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
 Saturdays on Washington Avenue and 10th
 Street, downtown Navasota. Fruits,
 vegetables, herbs, jellies & jams and more.
 936-661-3210.

Quinoa

When my husband I lived in Peru (2007-2009), we became well acquainted with quinoa, which is one of the top five exports from that fantastic growing region of the world (the other four are bananas, coffee, asparagus and mangoes).

I grew it in my garden this year and it did very well. I have found that relatively few people have heard of it in my new homeland of Texas, so I thought I would share.

Quinoa, the so-called "golden grain of the Incas", silently but steadily has been gnawing in the competitive international market, not only for its high nutritional value, but also for its endless applications in the gourmet kitchen. The undisputed queen of the Peruvian Andes, it will finally have the seat it deserves as the United Nations has declared 2013 as the 'International Year of Quinoa', to highlight the virtues of one of the products of Peru's rich biodiversity that most captures the attention of foreign buyers, especially from Japan, Sweden, France, USA, Germany and Canada.

Quinoa at a Glance

"While no single food can supply all the essential life sustaining nutrients, quinoa comes as close as any other in the plant or animal kingdom."



That was the pronouncement of researcher Philip White, in an obscure 1955- article on "Edible Seed Products of the Andes Mountains." While very few people may have read White's original article, in the last few years his words have been repeated on countless websites and in articles, in newspapers and magazines, as quinoa has been rediscovered.

Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*, or goosefoot) is in fact not technically a cereal grain at all, but is instead what we call a "pseudo-cereal" – the name for foods that are cooked and eaten like grains and have a similar nutrient profile. Botanically, quinoa is related to beets, chard and spinach, and in fact the leaves can be eaten as well as the grains. It's a testimonial to how far quinoa has come in the last five years - most people now know it is pronounced *KEEN-wah*, not *kwin-OH-a*.

Quinoa grows on magenta stalks three to nine feet tall, with large seed heads that can be almost any color, from red, purple and orange to green, black or yellow. The seed heads are prolific: a half pound of seed can plant a full acre, yielding 1200-2000 pounds of new seeds per acre. Since nutrient-rich quinoa is also drought resistant, and grows well on poor soils without irrigation or fertilizer, it's been designated a "super crop" by the United Nations, for its potential to feed the hungry poor of the world.

Over 120 different varieties of quinoa are known, but the most commonly cultivated and commercialized are white (sometimes

known as yellow or ivory) quinoa, red quinoa, and black quinoa. Quinoa flakes and quinoa flour are increasingly available, usually at health food stores.



Sacred to the Incas, quinoa was referred to by them as *chisaya mama*, or the mother of all grains. Legend has it that each year, the Incan emperor would sow the first quinoa seeds, with much solemn ceremony. Although it's estimated that Bolivians in the Lake Titicaca area began to cultivate quinoa at least five thousand years ago, quinoa came close to disappearing after 1532. That's when Francisco Pizarro, the Spanish explorer, destroyed the quinoa fields to undermine the Incan culture, built as it was on ceremonies that almost all involved quinoa. Only small pockets of wild quinoa at high altitudes survived, and quinoa was largely forgotten until its "rediscovery" by the outside world in the 1970s.

Today, an amazing range of products are made with quinoa, from breakfast cereals to beverages. Quinoa pasta is popular among those following a gluten-free diet, and the grain is a favorite ingredient in granolas, breads, and crackers. Home bakers can try "ancient grain" blends or cook with quinoa flakes and flours.

Health Benefits of Quinoa

Quinoa is known as an "ancient grain," but to most scientific researchers, it's a new kid on the block. While the existing research on quinoa pales next to well-studied grains like oats or barley, the pace of quinoa research is picking up, and presenting some intriguing preliminary data.

- Quinoa is a more nutritious option for gluten free diets.
- Quinoa may be useful in reducing the risk for diabetes.
- Quinoa helps you feel fuller longer.

It's not surprising that quinoa supports good health, as it's one of the only plant foods that is a complete protein, offering all the essential amino acids in a healthy balance. Not only is the protein complete, but quinoa grains have a usually high ratio of protein to carbohydrate, since the germ makes up about 60% of the grain. (For comparison, wheat germ comprises less than 3% of a wheat kernel.) Quinoa is also highest of all the whole grains in potassium, which helps control blood pressure.

What's more, quinoa is gluten free, which makes it extremely useful to the celiac community and to others who may be sensitive to more common grains such as wheat – or even to all grains in the grass family.

Cooking Tips and Recipes for Quinoa

Quinoa has quickly become a favorite of whole grain cooks, because its tiny grains are ready to eat in just 15 minutes! You can tell when it's done, because you'll see that little white tail– the germ of the kernel – sticking out. Like couscous, quinoa benefits from a quick fluff with a fork just before serving.

Quinoa has a subtle nutty taste that marries well with all kinds of ingredients. But make sure you rinse it well before cooking: quinoa grows with a bitter coating, called saponin

that fends off pests and makes quinoa easy to grow without chemical pesticides. While most quinoa sold today has had this bitter coating removed, an extra rinse is a good idea to remove any residue.

Cooks can choose from ivory, red, or black quinoa; from sprouted quinoa; from Arzu (a blend of buckwheat, quinoa, beans, and spices); or from quinoa flakes or flour, as a starting point for cooking.

Sources: Peruvian Cuisine for the World, wholegrainscouncil.org,



This is my bowl of harvested quinoa. Now to separate the grain from the chaff!

Tangy Quinoa Salad

½ cup (100g) of quinoa
1 cup (100ml) water
1 stalk spring onions
1 red pepper
1/4 cucumber - sliced
1/2 cup (200ml) orange juice
1 teaspoon lime juice
1 Tablespoon balsamic vinegar
Pinch of salt

Instructions:

Cook the quinoa in the water for about 15 minutes. Let cool. This can be done ahead. Prepare the vegetables and combine well with the cooled quinoa. Mix juices, vinegar and salt together. Combine the juice mixture with the Quinoa mix and serve.

Recipe courtesy of Ken Jones, author of [The Quinoa Cookbook](#)



Meet Michael Brame!



For April's newsletter we had some communication difficulties getting Michael's interview on time, so we've included it his month.

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

Palestine; all my life except for about three years in St. Louis.

Where is the farthest you have traveled from Texas?

Mittersill, Austria

Where would you go on your dream vacation?

The island of Saint Keys

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

Rosedown Plantation in Louisiana, because of the roses and its pristine layout.

What restaurant do you go to more than any other?

What-a-Burger, unfortunately.

What is your favorite season?

Fall

Why are you a Master Gardener or Intern?

Gardening is a love, but so is learning and perfecting things.

What is the closest you have been to a natural disaster?

Sitting through Hurricane Carla.

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

Walking in the woods on my place, surveying timber to be cut after the drought.

Where would you like to go that is "off the beaten bath"?

Again, the island of Saint Keys, in the southern Caribbean.

What vegetable do you hate?

Cooked asparagus or okra, take your pick.

What is your favorite ice cream?

Bluebell's Tin Roof

What chore do you absolutely hate doing?

Vacuuming

Are you a social butterfly or do you prefer solitary endeavors?

Usually tend to be a loner, though I love talking to small groups of folks.

Name one wonderful childhood memory involving gardening.

My first garden all my own as a young teen.

What would you say is your garden style?

Country mostly.

explains, are an expensive drug plus its possible side effects, or gardening, yard work, or a romp in the park. Your doctor, it turns out, hasn't gone round the bend. She is actually up-to-date on the latest scientific findings about how the natural environment affects our brain function.

The dirt-and-Prozac connection surfaced a couple of years ago from Dr. Chris Lowry and his colleagues at the University of Bristol and University College London. They exposed lung cancer patients to a common, inoffensive microbe called *Mycobacterium vaccae*, found in soil. The patients unexpectedly reported increases in their quality of life, including a brighter mood. The researchers wondered if this effect was caused by stimulation of neurons in the patients' brains that produce serotonin, a feel-good chemical.

Taking the next step, they broke up *M. vaccae* into fragments with sound waves and injected them into the windpipes of anesthetized mice. When compared to controls, the mice exposed to *M. vaccae* had more activity in serotonin-producing neurons and higher levels of serotonin in several areas of the brain. "[The bacteria] had the exact same effect as antidepressant drugs," Dr. Lowry said. The scientists said that one might derive dirt's benefit directly by rooting around in a vegetable garden, or by eating lettuce or carrots picked from that garden. Popular media ran with the findings. "Is Dirt the New Prozac?" asked [Discover](#) magazine.

The dirt-and-Prozac connection fits with a recent idea in medicine called the "hygiene hypothesis." According to this concept, exposure early in life to the bacteria, fungi, and viruses found in common, everyday dirt is necessary to stimulate our immune system. When children are exposed to the stew of microbes in dirt, their immune systems become stronger. The immune system also learns to ignore substances like pollen or the dandruff of pets, which can trigger asthma and allergies. Researchers have shown, for example, that kids who grow up in dirty environments such as farms have a lower incidence of infections, asthma, allergies, and eczema later in life, compared to kids raised in urban environments in which parents try to keep them squeaky clean.

For a century and a half we have waged merciless war on filth through public health measures such as public sanitation systems and water purification programs. These developments have been enormously successful. The increase in lifespan in modern societies is due largely to the reduction of

death rates from diseases such as typhoid and cholera, which in nineteenth-century America were called "filth diseases."

We have to wonder, however, if we have gone too far in our obsession with hygiene. Throughout our evolutionary history our ancestors lived in intimate contact with dirt, and its influence, we now see, was not all bad. We evolved in the outdoors, and we are beginning to glimpse the price we are paying for shutting ourselves off from nature.

Don't worry. Nobody is suggesting that we never bathe or clean our bathrooms. Neither is it necessary to inject *M. vaccae* into our windpipe. If we merely go for a walk in the woods, grub around in our vegetable garden, or weed our flowerbeds, we get a dose of the good bugs simply by inhaling.

"Nature deficiency disorder" has been proposed as a term for the problems we create when we build a wall between the natural world and ourselves. I am highly susceptible to this malady. When I spend too much time indoors, I become increasingly moody and morose. There's only one cure: take a hike, go camping, or root around in my veggie garden. These activities are more than a hobby; they have become an essential part of my life and an important element in my personal health plan.

What about kids? Not so long ago, play and getting dirty were pretty much the same thing — frolicking in a sand box, making mud pies, romping in parks. Now many parents are horrified by dirty play. Keeping kids spotless and unsoiled, however, may be setting them up for trouble later on, because without exposure to nature's medley of microbes our kids can grow up with confused, weak immune systems. Can we rethink the prohibition on dirty play for the sake of our children's health?

Antidepressant medication can sometimes be a treatment of choice. It can work wonders, and in some instances can be life-saving. But if your doctor advises you to get dirty instead of taking a pill to perk up your mood, don't look at her strangely. Pride yourself on having a physician who is on the cutting edge.

Think of it this way: Have you ever seen an unhappy earthworm?

By — H. L. Mencken

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-larry-dossey/is-dirt-the-new-prozac_b_256625.html

BENEFITS OF SOIL



Imagine: You're feeling so depressed that you visit your doctor and request a prescription for a mood elevator. Instead of writing you a prescription for Prozac or a similar antidepressant, she advises you to get dirty. While you consider changing doctors, she describes how getting dirty changes your brain chemistry. The microbes in dirt, she says, tweak the same neurons that are stimulated by Prozac. Your options, she

Alvie Vesperman



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

I was born in Eastern Kentucky and moved to the Houston area in 1968.

Where is the farthest you have traveled from Texas?

Honduras, North California, and Boston, Mass.

Where would you go on your dream vacation?

Israel

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

My favorite tree is a live oak, especially old ones with huge, drooping branches. We have a young tree which is growing as fast as it can!!

My favorite flower is whatever is blooming now. Pansies are special because there is so little color in winter. We try to have something blooming all the time.



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

Ruby Mize Azalea Gardens in Nacogdoches, near SFA University. The hundreds of Japanese maples are wonderful, and the azaleas are pretty spectacular too.

What restaurant do you go to more than any other?

Koko's at Texas Star Winery, which recently closed. I am looking forward to their opening at a new location.

What is your favorite season?

Spring, because of all the shades of green I see as the earth wakes from winter.



Why are you a Master Gardener or Intern?

I wanted to know more about how to garden in Texas, and I am still learning. I also enjoy sharing what I have learned.

What is the closest you have been to a natural disaster?

Last summer's wildfires were very close. We also weathered Hurricanes Ike and Alicia. The Hooks Airport tornado in 1986 damaged our house and destroyed several trees.

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

We are "back to nature" people. We often go looking for newborn calves which have been hidden by their mom.

Where would you like to go that is "off the beaten bath"?

My hometown; Morehead, Kentucky.

What vegetable do you hate?

English Peas

What do you love the smell of?

My Maggie Rose, which smells like my grandmother's garden. I also love rosemary, baking bread, and cinnamon.

What is your favorite ice cream?

Blue Bell butter pecan

Are you a social butterfly or do you prefer solitary endeavors?

I prefer visiting friends in small groups, and enjoy being alone or with Fred.

Name one wonderful childhood memory involving gardening.

I loved helping my mom in the vegetable garden. We planted, weeded, and picked produce.

What would you say is your garden style?

Cottage, with a little arboretum (is that a style?) thrown in.

(Photos from Alvie's garden)

EDNA LYNN'S OATMEAL COOKIES

On March 20th, Lynn brought these scrumptious cookies for snack during our class.

3 cups rolled oats

3 cups flour

2 cups sugar

1 cup nuts

1-1/2 cups raisins

1 box flaked coconut

2 tablespoons molasses

1 cup shortening, melted

1 teaspoon cinnamon

2 eggs, beaten

7 tablespoons milk

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla

Mix all ingredients together with hands and drop small pieces onto cookie sheet. Bake at 350F for 12 minutes.

Doesn't get much easier! And so good!

The Bone House

On April 19th, we had a field-trip to Huntsville to discover what the Phoenix Commotion has been up to. The Phoenix Commotion is a local building initiative created to prove that constructing homes with recycled and salvaged materials has a viable place in the building industry.

THANKS TO SHARON MURRY

Sharon took these photos on the field trip. I appreciate those of you who take photos of events and submit them to the newsletter, as I cannot be at all activities. Keep it up!



Glass blocks and wine bottles make a wall in the outdoor area.



When they said "Bone House", they meant that literally!



Dan has the attention of a rapt group of Master Gardeners!

Dan Phillips has a primal love of bone and used it in both functional and ornamental designs throughout the inside and outside of the property.



Marti shows off a new use for soda caps

Meet Kendra Dromgoole-Pate!



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

2016 Main, Houston, Texas, Proud Houstonian

Where is the farthest you have traveled from Texas?

Canada, then China in 2007 for softball tour.

Where would you go on your dream vacation?

Australia or Hawaii

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

Too many, I really love my white spider lily, and I love all of my trees, mainly the fruit bearing trees.

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

Gardens in China were fabulous, I LOVE bamboo and they had every variety. They were immaculate. Also, Coles Garden in OK, city was nice. It had beautiful weeping willows near a pond, so beautiful. It is also special to me because I took pictures on the swing while I was pregnant with both boys.

What restaurant do you go to more than any other?

When we lived in Houston it was Miyako Sushi and La Cabana. Now that we live in Waller there is nothing close by so I'm cooking at home more than ever. If we want some good food we'll travel to Cypress for Gringo's.

What is your favorite season?

Spring of course!

Why are you a Master Gardener or Intern?

I want to grow our own food. It's important to me that my boys grow up knowing where their food comes from and how to eat nutritious foods. I would also love to start a JMG program at my son's soon to be school, Fieldstore Elementary.

What is the closest you have been to a natural disaster? In 2011 I went into labor on Labor Day, same day as Montgomery County fires and mandatory evacuation of our area. My neighbor calls Steele – Smokey because he was born during the fires and calls Jett – Stormy because he was born right after Hurricane IKE.

When in your life have you needed an alibi?

When planning my husband's surprise 30th birthday party; that was so hard to pull off. I'll need another one in October as I plan his surprise 40th!

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

Kendra and her sons Steele and Jett

Every Deer season! This summer we'll be camping in New Braunfels. Also, the boys and I walk every morning and discover new bugs and flowers.

Where would you like to go that is "off the beaten path"?

I'm going to a yoga retreat in May and I guess you can consider it "off the beaten path" and a "back to nature" experience. There is no makeup, no technology, it's comfy clothes, yoga mats, bamboo – my favorite, just a relaxing weekend to enjoy nature, exercise body and spirit, something I plan on doing more of.

What do you love the smell of?

I love the smell of mint and my citrus tree blooms.

What is your favorite ice cream?

Milk chocolate! If I want a real treat I'll go for the Mocha almond fudge or Rocky Road!

What electronic gadget could you not live without?

iPhone & iPad. How did we ever get by without them??

Are you a social butterfly or do you prefer solitary endeavors?

Little bit of both, really depends on the day and group of people I'm with. I prefer smaller groups.

Name one wonderful childhood memory involving gardening.

My great grandmother was huge in the Gardening world in Houston when I was younger. My dad tells me stories of him going to her speaking engagements when he was a boy. But my favorite memory was Easter hunts at her house. I loved being surrounded by her beautiful plants and finding eggs I always found new unique flowers to talk to her about.



Kendra's favorite tree; she has plans to add plants but right now it's a great shade tree, her son plays soccer under it, swings on his tire swing, it's a great place for our family to hang out.

~ ~ ~

I think that no matter how old or infirm I may become, I will always plant a large garden in the spring. Who can resist the feelings of hope and joy that one gets from participating in nature's rebirth?

~Edward Giobbi

In our propagation class on May 1st, Helen Quinn guided us through chipping bulbs and cutting everything from roses to Rose of Sharon!

Helen has kindly submitted the list of cuttings we "stuck" today.

I have supplemented her information with photos so we know what to expect from our wee starts!

Hopefully you marked your additional plants so you can remember what they are! They included:



Naturalized spider lilies

The bulbs were *Lycoris radiata* (red spider lily), which is in the amaryllis family. It flowers in the late summer or autumn, often in response to heavy rainfall. The common name **hurricane lily** refers to this characteristic, as do other common names, such as spider lily, naked lady and surprise lily.



***Malvaviscus penduliflorus* (giant turk's cap)**

A member of the mallow family, the flowers of the Turk's cap look very much like drooping, wilted hibiscus flower buds that never open. Also known by many other names such as Mazapan, Turk's Cap, Firecracker Hibiscus, Sleeping Hibiscus, Sleepy Mallow, and Cardinal's Hat.



***Hibiscus syriacus* (althea)** Also known as Rose of Sharon, Shrub Althea and Rose Althea. It is widely planted in areas with hot summers for its very attractive white, pink, red, lavender or purple large and edible flowers. Individual flowers are short-lived, lasting only a day. However, numerous flower buds are produced on the shrub's new growth, which provides prolific flowering over a long summer blooming period (July–September).



Duranta erecta is also known as Sky Flower, Golden Dewdrops or Pigeonberry. It usually forms a multi-stemmed clump with branches that droop and trail.



***Justicia spicigera* (Mexican honeysuckle)** An evergreen shrub also known (of course it has many names, do you see a trend here?) as orange plume, firecracker or mohintli. And it's not even a honeysuckle at all, Mexican or otherwise!

Helen: "I hope they do well for you - if not, come and see me in November; bring your supplies and shears, and we'll try again!!!"