



HOE! HOE! HOE!

Grimes County Master Gardeners Newsletter

*Winner of the Texas Master Gardener Association
2nd Place Newsletter Award 2006*

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Texas AgriLife Extension:

Shane Jennings: MG Coordinator
Sandra Cook: Secretary

Newsletter Editor:

Helen Quinn
Articles, photos and other
Information due by 27th of each month.
Send to:

hortiq@gmail.com

Website:

txmg.org/grimes
grimesmastergardeners@gmail.com



Mike Arden's very interesting program on Greenhouses

VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

DECEMBER

Cabbage: American 9/15-12/31

In the flower garden you can continue planting cool season annuals such as Calendula, Antirrhinum (snapdragon), alyssum, lobelia, etc., and also herbs such as parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme, cilantro.

Ornamentals, perennials, fruit trees can go in now, as can the rest of the spring flowering bulbs you bought and didn't get around to planting - don't leave any in the Refrigerator!!!

Make your seed selections for next year from the catalogs which will soon be arriving in the mail, and try something new!



RESPONSE TO MYRTLE MAE HAWKINS

Brussels sprouts can be grown anywhere there is a cool season in which to mature them. They can withstand frost very well, but are averse to extreme heat, long, hot, dry summers, unless they are grown as a fall and winter crop. The best average temperature range for growth is 60 to 65F. Just dig a hole about the size of the pot and pop in the plant!

Plan on about 5 plants per person, mulch well as soon as they are transplanted and provide shade to prevent transplant shock. Keep soil uniformly moist, and keep the plants well fed with a high-potassium fertilizer such as seaweed extract. All transplants need cutworm collars. Keep the area free of weeds, but be careful of the shallow roots as you cultivate. In windy regions, these top-heavy plants benefit from support stakes. Pests and diseases are the same as for cabbage.

Unlike their cousins, the cabbages, Brussels Sprouts are suited to the small garden because they produce vertically along a stem which can reach 3 feet in height. Each plant produces between 60 – 100 sprouts, 1 to 2 inches in diameter. The leaves at the top resemble collard greens and can be prepared and eaten as such. Once the sprouts at the bottom of the stalk begin maturing, they may be harvested over a period of six to eight weeks, even after the first killing frost. Just like the gardeners, they don't appreciate this hot and cold weather that we experience in this part of Texas! That's why sometimes they thrive and sometimes they don't.

Brussels sprouts are very nutritious. They have high amounts of vitamins A, C, B1 and B2, and are rich in calcium, potassium, and iron.

Answered with the help of Rodale's "Organic Gardening"

ON THE CALENDAR December/January 2010/2011

- Dec 3** GCMG Christmas Party/Meeting, Go Texan Building, 6.00 pm
Dec 4 TMGA Directors' meeting – 11.00-3.00 Forest Sci-Hort Building, TAMU
Dec 9 Navasota Christmas Parade – downtown Navasota. 6.30pm
Dec 25 MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!
Jan 11 GCMG Reg. Monthly Meeting – Go Texan Building, followed by pot luck lunch & work afternoon, weather permitting.

NEWS FLASH : 2011 CLASS WILL START ON JANUARY 18TH, AT THE GO TEXAN BUILDING. START RECRUITING NOW!!!

Applications are available on our website txmg.org/grimes and at the Extension Office, and in October will be distributed to area nurseries and businesses.

schedule is as follows:

Jan 18	Jayla Fry	MG Program/EarthKind Landscaping
Jan 25	Martin Thomas	Landscape Horticulture
Feb 01	Sam Feagly	Soil, Water & Plant Nutrients
Feb 08	Lisa Whittlesey	Plant Growth & Development
Feb 15	Ann Wheeler	Herbs
Feb 22	Carlos Bogran	Plant Health
Mar 01	Bart Drees	Entomology
Mar 08	Tom Leroy	Home Fruit & Nut Production
Mar 15	Tom Leroy	Vegetable Gardening
Mar 22	David Chalmers	Lawn Care/Turf Grasses
Mar 29	Helen Quinn/Sandra Williams	Propagation
Apr 05	Robert & Sandra Stuckey	Rainwater Harvesting
	Sharon Murry	Composting
Apr 12	Shane Jennings	Communications
	GCMGs	Open discussion

Regular meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Go Texan Building, Grimes Co. Fairgrounds, 9.00 am., except as noted below. Two field trips are planned annually, and two evening meetings held at members' homes to enable members who work to participate.

REMINDER: DUES FOR CERTIFIED MASTER GARDENERS WILL BE DUE IN JANUARY – PLEASE BRING YOUR \$18 TO THE JANUARY MEETING.

WHAT WE DO WHEN WE'RE HAVING FUN!!

ONGOING PROJECTS:

- *Rose beds and landscaping at Go Texan Building, Fairgrounds.
- *Landscaping at Texas Agri-Life Extension Office.
- *Painting Texas with Wildflowers
- *Main Street Anderson Beautification



At each meeting there will be a suggestion box available for your ideas on programs, projects, field trips, what you like about GCMG and what you don't like.

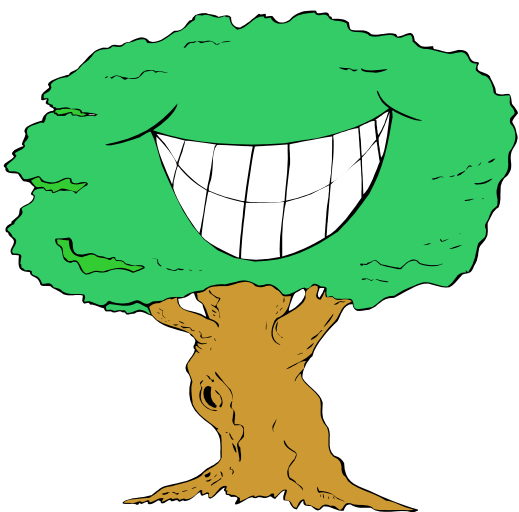
We also participate in once-a-year activities such as Farm Bureau Ag Day, Senior Day and horticulture judging at the County Fair, Boy Scout programs, Courthouse rose beds.

We have a dedicated email address for gardening questions from the public, and a Panel of volunteers to answer the questions:

grimesmastergardeners@gmail.com



*If you want to live and thrive, let the spider run alive
American Quaker saying*



SMILE GARDEN

Submitted by Connie Arden

Smiling is the beginning of laughter.....plant some smile seeds to grow into laughter and reap blossoms of positive physical, mental, and social benefits.

A few Christmas Tree thoughts to add to your "CHRISTMAS SPIRIT".....

- The perfect Christmas tree? ALL Christmas trees are perfect!
- The best Christmas trees come very close to exceeding nature.
- Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall.
- Why did Santa Claus take his Christmas Tree to the dentist?.....to get a root canal!
- What do you get when you cross an apple with a Christmas Tree?.....a pineapple!
- AND FINALLY.....What did one Christmas Tree say to the other Christmas Tree?.....I really go FIR you!

Best Wishes for a Merry and Blessed Christmas

African Proverb: "When a leaf falls, the tree gets the blame"

SELF SUFFICIENCY

When I was a girl my family was essentially self sufficient. This self sufficiency included raising and butchering our own animals, gathering eggs and growing fruit trees and vegetables. Meat was cured, butter was made and fruit and vegetables were canned and frozen. Material from flour sacks was recycled providing clothing and quilts. We generated extra income by selling chickens, eggs, pies and cakes. I grew up and left the self sufficient life behind.

Then on one freezing cold night, I was offered the best wine that I have ever tasted. My first deceased husband's grandfather made wine. He lived on a small acreage in the middle of New Haven, Connecticut, grew grapes and had large barrels of wine in his basement. Upon returning to his home, in the spring, I found that this elderly man maintained a very productive vegetable garden and orchard. Thus, I realized that a person did not have to live in the country in order to grow his own produce.

When I moved back to San Antonio I made a decision that my back yard would be a vegetable garden rather than a lawn. I planted three pear trees and the remainder of the yard was tilled resulting in a very productive garden. Now, at this juncture, I will state that if I had to do it over the back yard would not be tilled. Tilling destroys the soil structure. Permaculture and lasagna gardening are far superior.

Finally, while I realize that everyone does not have a large lot or acreage to grow their own produce, most everyone, in some manner, can grow some of their own food. For example, if you have a patio container gardens can be very productive. When my youngest daughter lived in Manhattan, with some effort, we set up a roof top container garden. I knew a lady in San Antonio that grew vegetables in hanging baskets. In closing I suggest that if you really do not desire to grow your own produce or if for some reason you are unable to grow your own produce, go to the Farmer's Market. Purchase the superior locally grown produce.

Carolyn Guillotte

Don't forget – Christmas Parade Dec. 9th. If you want to participate you need to let us know by December 3rd at the party by the very latest.

'Tis the Season Plant Guide – by Barbara Svatek

I think the holidays bring out a special appreciation of nature for gardeners. While I love the holiday decorations, they're becoming overwhelming to me. I think it has something to do with them showing up before the Halloween decorations are moved to the sale bin. So I whisk past the trappings and head for the displays of poinsettias, Norfolk pines and miniature Christmas trees – and any other plant that has been displayed for the holidays. Besides the high price tag, are you daunted by how to care for the plant if you bring it home? Do you worry that it might not make it to New Year's? Well, here is a quick reference guide to help you decide. Don't settle for plastic if you really prefer the real thing! All of these plants can be incorporated into your indoor or outdoor garden... how's that for "growing" a healthy economy? Have fun with your holiday plants... may they help you share joy and cheer this season!

NORFOLK PINE (*Araucaria heterophylla*): This quintessential indoor Christmas houseplant enjoys a cool room around 65 degrees and bright light about four feet away from a sunny window. Turn it to keep it growing symmetrically. It can *survive* in fluorescent or incandescent light only (at least 16 hours), but will begin to decline and die within a couple of years. It is best to use rainwater for watering, but in this drought, who has it? In the winter, let the soil dry out between waterings. In the summer, water more often, but it doesn't like wet feet. Lack of moisture will cause browning and dropping needles. This is due to lack of humidity, so mist it or use a humidifier. Also, feed it monthly in the summer. It doesn't like repotting; limit it to every 3-4 years. Another tip: prune brown tips and dead branches only – it doesn't regenerate.

POINSETTIA (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*): Alleluia Poinsettias! Who can resist these beautiful bursts of red (or pink or any of the other colors you may find)? Select a plant with stiff stems and no signs of drooping or breaking. Poinsettias don't like to be crowded, so avoid those wrapped in plastic and wedged like sardines on a display shelf. Plastic sleeves can also create waterlogging, which spells disease and death to poinsettias. Poinsettias like indirect sunlight, away from drafts, vents or appliances (which can be drying). It prefers temperatures between 65-70 degrees. Keep in mind they are poisonous, so place with care if youngsters are about. Also, if pinching off petals or replanting, wear rubber gloves as the plant emits a toxin that is aggravating to skin. Water only when it is approaching dryness.

After the bracts begin to fade by late March or early April, cut the plant back to 8 inches and use a general fertilizer. When nighttime temperatures stay above 55 degrees, the plant can be moved outdoors. Water regularly and fertilize every two weeks. Around the first of June regular pruning can begin to keep it compact and bushy. Also the plant can be repotted in a pot four inches larger in diameter than it's previous one – use plenty of organic matter in the soil. Stop pruning by September 1st! Beginning October 1st, the plant must be in complete darkness for 14 hours each day, with sunlight 6-8 hours. Continue watering as needed, and fertilize until December. This program should produce a dazzling resurgence of those glorious blooms in time for the next holiday.

BLUE POINT JUNIPER (*Juniperus chinensis*) The cool thing about this plant is that it has a natural pyramidal shape without pruning! It is hardy in our zone, and once established, is drought tolerant. It grows to fifteen feet tall and six feet wide, so if planting in your landscape, give it plenty of room in a full sun to partially shady location. It prefers slightly acidic and sandy soil – some of us may have that type of soil in Grimes County. It needs regular watering, but not soggy roots. Fertilize it in the spring and again in early fall after temps start to cool.

