



HOE! HOE! HOE!

Grimes County Master Gardeners Newsletter

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

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Calendar December 2011/January 2012

- Dec 3 10. 30am TMGA Directors Meeting, TAMU Hort Bldg
- Dec 2 6.30pm Christmas party/meeting/awards at Go Texan GC Fairgrounds.
- Dec 10 6.00pm Christmas Parade in Navasota

November regular meeting



Great program by Jeff Lehde of Plant People LLC on trees and drought, including how to prevent drought stress, how to properly water and feed, how to tell if a tree is really dead, etc.



GCMG 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. Two field trips are planned annually, and two evening meetings held at members' homes to enable members who work to participate.

Officers, 2011

President: Jennifer Corzine
Vice President: Alvie Vesperman
Treasurer: Barbara Szymczak
Secretary: Helen Quinn

Committee Chairs

Go Texan Landscaping: Mike Arden
Communications: Helen Quinn
Children's: Kathy Laughlin
Admin: Sandra Williams
Class: Jennifer Corzine/Kathy Laughlin
Co-op: Fred Vesperman
Time: Kathy Denning
Anderson Beautification: Janeth Nevill/
Barbara Szymczak

Publicity: Peggy Sloan
Fundraiser: Linda Jolly
Awards/Social: Connie Arden

Texas AgriLife Extension:

Shane Jennings: MG Coordinator
Sandra Curl: 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

VEGETABLE PLANTING GUIDE

DECEMBER



And then there were 2 Time to Hang up your planting tools and think of Spring with the three 'P's – Plan, Prepare, Plant!

Cabbage* 9/15 - 12/31
Carrot 9/15 - 12/31

- Use plants, not seeds; be sure to provide shade and adequate water.



Swiss Chard – *Beta vulgaris var. cicla*
Also known as Leaf beet, perpetual spinach, spinach chard.

Swiss chard and beets share a common ancestor, both being descended from the same wild European plant. Swiss chard differs from the beet by not having the thick, fleshy root of beets. This great plant can stay in the ground a long time, even during hot weather, and keep on producing delicious leaves. It does well in a variety of soils, tolerates some shade, takes a great deal of heat without bolting, and can produce leaves for as long as two years before it becomes unusable. Some of them, "Bright Lights" for example, can also be used as an ornamental, with midribs of crimson, yellow or white and dark green leaves. Swiss chard is a great substitute for spinach, and will tolerate some frost. It can be cropped from late spring to late fall, unusual for any kind of vegetable.

For best production, provide a well-drained, fertile soil rich in humus. Fertilize before planting by digging in liberal amounts of well-rotted manure or compost. Swiss chard will tolerate a soil that is slightly acid, with a pH of 6.0 to 6.8. A rough guideline is to plant three to five plants per person.

Direct seeding is an easy way to start Swiss chard, but to save time, look for transplants. Sow seed two to four weeks before the average frost-free date. In mild-climates, make a late summer planting about ten weeks before the average first frost date for winter and spring harvest. Sow seed ½ inch deep, 3 inches apart, with rows 18 inches apart. Unused seed is viable for up to four years if stored properly. When the seedlings are 5 to 8 inches tall, thin back to 9-inch spacing in the rows.

Swiss chard is relatively trouble-free, but slugs and snails may bother the plants if present in the garden. possible diseases include blight and downy mildew. Swiss Chard is especially high in vitamin C, calcium, and iron. The red-leaves varieties are also extremely rich in vitamin A.

Helen Quinn

With references from How to Grow Vegetables Organically
By Jeff Cox

2012 CLASS

Will start February 21, and will run every Tuesday 8.30-12.30 through May 15 at the Go Texan Building, Grimes County Fairgrounds. Speakers are already confirmed. Tell all your family, friends and neighbors, and be watching for more information as plans develop!

SCHEDULE FOR 2012 CLASS

February 21	Jayla Fry	MG Program/EarthKind Landscaping
February 28	Lisa Whittlesey	Plant Growth & Development
March 6	Sam Feagley	Soil, Water & Plant Nutrients
March 13	Tom Leroy	Vegetable Gardening
March 20	Bart Drees	Entomology
March 27	Carlos Bogran	Plant Health
April 3	David Chalmers	Lawns & Turfgrass
April 10	Tom Leroy	Home Fruit & Nut Production
April 17	Ann Wheeler	Herbs
April 24	Martin Thomas	Landscape Horticulture
May 1	Helen Quinn	Propagation
May 8	Sharon Murry	Composting
	Stuckeys	Rainwater Harvesting
May 15	Shane Jennings	Communications/General
	MGs	Open discussion/program/lunch

The flyer and application forms are available on our website txmg.org/grimes, at local Businesses, and at the Grimes County AgriLife Extension Office on Judson Street, Navasota.



Everybody's favourite, the "Bat-Faced" Cuphea, is easy to grow, easy to propagate from stem cuttings.

This article is provided courtesy of Dave's Garden Educators' Newsletter.



This plant is also listed as a hummingbird favourite, and as being drought-tolerant.

Bat-Face Cuphea
Cuphea
llaveaCuphea llavea
 is a tender sub-shrub, native to Mexico. Placed in a container or added to the landscape, this flowering tropical plant will grow to about two feet tall by two or three feet wide.

Whether grown as a perennial or annual, it will attract hummingbirds all summer, while delighting children and adults who peer into the blooms looking for an image of a bat or a mouse.

It is heat and drought tolerant, but appreciates adequate moisture and occasional pinching to keep it in shape. The plants produce masses of purple-black tubular flowers, each about an inch long, and ending with two upward-facing petals that form the ears atop the purple "face".

» [Read more about this plant at](http://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/2033/)
<http://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/2033/>
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Type of plant:
 Annuals, Tropicals and Tender Perennials

Bloom color: Red, Dark Purple/Black

Bloom time of year:
 Late Spring/Early Summer, Mid Summer, Late Summer/Early Fall, Blooms repeatedly

Sun requirements: **Sun** to Partial Shade

Cold hardiness:
 Zone 8a to Zone 11

Height: 18-24 in. (45-60 cm)

Spacing: 24-36 in. (60-90 cm)



Shade

Shade is one of our most precious gifts and is a valuable tool for conservation.

I realized the true value of shade one day when I was shoveling manure and observed that while I was about to pass out my husband was enjoying the shade of a tree.

A few weeks later I took my grandsons to baseball practice. I truly dreaded having to watch them on the hot practice field. Then, I found a tree and was very comfortable watching the practice. The next day, at a different field, I discovered that there was a row of trees and it was actually fairly cool under the trees.

As the dreaded summer continued I watched many plants, despite being watered, turn brown and die. Slowly, I began to realize that not just humans, but some plants, are prone to survive if shaded from blistering heat.

I listened carefully as gardeners touted the virtue of shade cloth. AND I remembered reading, some years back, that a daylily farmer covered some of his daylilies with shade cloth.

There are more options to increase our shade in order to conserve energy and our earth.

First, we can plant trees. Trees shade our homes and decrease the need for energy to cool our homes. Additionally, trees shade other plants from the blazing sun. We can build porches, pergolas and awnings to shade our windows and doors. Drapes also are valuable to protect our home from the blistering sun.

Additionally, we can use different forms of mulch to shade our soil and increase fertility in order to grow better crops. Finally I would like to state that rocks are of great value. By placing a stone in just the right place we can shade a seedling that is finding it difficult to survive blistering heat and in some cases grow into a great tree to shade our homes.

In closing, learn to think of shade as a form of conservation and wherever possible add shade.

Carolyn Guillotte



Wood

Burn Ban is the sign seen everywhere throughout the state of Texas.

Thus, everywhere stacks of trees and limbs are seen.

The owners of these stacks of wood patiently wait for a sign that the Burn Ban has been lifted. Once the ban is lifted fires will dot the landscape.

A better idea is to incorporate the wood in our gardens.

Personally, I discovered a better option. I built what is known as a Hugelkultur (German) or more simply a mound.

Now, I believe it is a good time to share a better solution to all of the stacked wood.

Decomposing wood is a ecological solution to wood debris as it keeps soil moist and produces disease-fighting compounds. First pile up wood debris at least two feet deep. Place compost materials on top of the wood debris. Moisten the pile and place more compost and soil on top of the mound.

When complete plant a variety of vegetables, fruiting bushes or whatever pleases your eye.

My mound continues to grow in size and increases in beauty as time passes.

In closing let me encourage you, if you have stacks of wood, consider using it in a beneficial rather than a destructive manner.

Carolyn Guillotte

Ed. Note: In googling "Hugelkultur" I found many interesting websites and even a video on Youtube extolling the virtues of this practice. Sounds like it is something definitely worth trying ! hq