

The Latest Dirt



Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners

November 2011

From The President

By Melody Weaver



Passing the gavel to the next president is just as honorable as receiving it. When I accepted this position 2 years ago it was an endeavor that I accepted with pride and dedication. I also had some feelings of uncertainty and anxiety but I found comfort and strength in all of you. So, as I step aside, I offer a heartfelt thanks to each & every one of you. This has been one of the most fulfilling ventures of my life and I will always treasure this opportunity that I've had to serve you as president.

To my board of executives, you have been my backbone and I appreciate each & every one for your dedicated service and personal friendship.

I am so glad to become a part of the heritage of Jefferson County Master Gardeners. I believe that we, as past executives have a lot to offer towards the future growth of our organization. I will continue to offer my assistance and support to the incoming executive committee.

We have all received benefit from speakers, seminars, social gatherings. Many of you have showcased your talents in some of these seminars and these events have been a contribution

President's message continued on Page 2

Agent's Two Cents

By Ricky Thompson



As the day light hours grow shorter and the nighttime temperatures get cooler, the fall season has finally arrived.

We are in the first days of November and the weather climate has been slow to change. For those of you that I have not met, please allow me to introduce myself. I'm Ricky Thompson, Agriculture Extension Agent for Jefferson County. I am pinch hitting in the position of our horticultural agent formally held by Micah Meyer. It's not my intention to become the horticulturist, but only to facilitate in the vacancy until Extension refills the position. **However, the opportunity comes with pleasure.** I do enjoy the role play and have thoroughly enjoyed working with the Master Gardener group. I still have my full responsibilities as an agriculture agent and ask you to understand my position. **I say thank you to those of you who have assisted Peggy and me in the office.** You are a wonderful group to work with and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Meetings are the second Thursday of each month, 7pm in the Extension Office Auditorium

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

November 10— Veteran's Tribute

December 14—Christmas Party

January 12 —



F.A.Q.'s



Question: If I make a purchase for the group, will I be reimbursed?

Answer: Please refer to the bylaws, Article IX, section 5 which states "All expenditures must be pre-approved by either the Executive Board or a team leader (committee chairman) according to their budget. Any unauthorized expenditures will be considered a donation to the organization."

Question: Can I attend a board meeting?

Answer: Yes, we go by the Sunshine Law which means anyone can attend a board meeting, but only members of the executive committee can discuss issues. According to Roberts Rules of Order, "members may be invited to attend meetings to give information for expert advice, but do not necessarily remain for deliberation. They are never allowed to vote." If you have any business that you would like to present to the board, contact the president in advance to be put on the agenda.

If you have any questions regarding procedure, history, etc. please send them to mshanks52@gmail.com and they will be answered in the next newsletter.



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to all of us. Our test garden is really beautiful. The new irrigation system & additional greenhouse is up and running thanks to the hard work and long hours of you and the dedicated Test Garden Committee.

I'm proud to say, as a group, we come together and put on seminars, we care about each other and our community and we take care of our own financial needs. We are a serious bunch and we get things done. A few times year we get together for a well deserved celebration of our achievements, pat each other on the on the back for job well done and just have fun. I look forward to our future together.

The Jefferson County Master Gardeners have so much to offer our community and to each other.

We are indeed a valuable resource to this wonderful place we all call home.

Melody Weaver

MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage and support the horticultural community of Southeast Texas through education and example.

2010—2012 Board Members

President—Melody Weaver
Vice President—Paul Eyre
Secretary—Stellina Reed
Treasurer—Dorothy Norris
At Large— Mel Day, Larry Jacobs, Dave Cummings
Past President—Micah Shanks

Newsletter Staff:

Editor: Micah Shanks
Layout: Peggy Coleman

Fran Amuny

1939—2011

It's difficult to lose a member of our group and losing Fran is certainly no exception. Fran was the true definition of "Southern Charm". Always a lady, always genuine, always a class act. Fran became a Master Gardener in 1995 and quickly became a leader on the local level before becoming active as our state representative. She served as state secretary, as well as on the nominating and awards committees. In



recent years, she volunteered her time to travel all over the state visiting master gardener groups as part of the state outreach program....a trouble shooter of sorts. Fran studied art in Salt Lake City and brought that artistic touch to her beautiful backyard garden and her many floral arrangements.

Fran worked side by side with her husband, Dr. Ronald Amuny, in their dental practice for many years. Their patients speak fondly of Fran as she held their hand and calmed them during dental procedures. The line that stretched around the building at her memorial was testament to the many lives she touched! She spoke often with pride of her daughter and two grandchildren. She had recently added two Maltese puppies to her family which spoke to her love of animals. Fran was a beautiful person who spread that beauty everywhere she went. She will be deeply missed.

JCMG will make a donation in Fran's name to the SETX Humane Society at the request of the family.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Golden Triangle Citrus Show

Thursday, November 17 7-9pm



To enter, bring 3 of your best citrus, cleaned and polished, to the Extension office from 9-4 on Wednesday the 16th or from 8-Noon on the 17th, or to the Test Garden on Wednesday from 9-Noon. Enter as many entries as you like. The program will feature Bonnie Childers speaking on the Best Root Stock, Citrus Programs and Pruning in Southeast Texas; admission is \$10.

Field Trip

November 4th Dorothy Norris is planning a field trip to the Rose Emporium in Brenham. If you would like to ride with her or caravan pool, meet up at the Market Basket on Hwy 105. The caravan leaves at 7:00am sharp.



Veteran's Program at November meeting. Send pictures of yourself or a member of your family in

uniform to Peggy in the Extension Office to include on a DVD that will be shown at the meeting.

Annual Christmas and Awards Party

December 14th at Tyrrell Park. Look for your invitation in the mail and don't forget to RSVP; répondez s'il vous plaît, meaning "reply please" or "please respond".



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU !!!!

November

Glenn Watz – 1
Ann Abshier -2
Dianne Duperier – 3
Michael Cate – 5
Anna Lee Ruby – 7
Bonnie Childers – 10
Gwin Genn – 15
Stellina Reed – 16
Ed Wharton – 17
Ronnie McGraw – 20

December

Fran Amuny – 4
Sarah Sloan – 4
Bonnie Edwards – 10
Jackie Steen – 16
Kathryn Stelly – 23

January

Gloria Morris – 5
Liz Gibbs – 7
Jo Carol Doyle – 8
Charisse Miller – 9
Cecil Hightower – 10
Virginia Culver – 11
Don Johnson (Hon.) – 24
Clarence DeCuir – 26



In The Kitchen With: **Dorothy Norris**

Old Fashioned Bread Pudding

1 (16 Oz) French bread, cubed
2 (12 oz) cans evaporated milk
1 c. water
6 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 (6 oz) can crushed pineapple
(I use the large can)

1 large Red Delicious apple, grated
1 c. raisins
1-1/2 c. sugar
5 Tbsp. vanilla extract
1/4 c. butter, cut up
Bourbon sauce

Combine the first 3 ingredients; stir in eggs, blending well, pineapple, and next 4 ingredients. Stir in butter, blending well. (I don't blend too hard, just gently blending so as not to break up the bread too much.) Pour into a greased 13x9 inch baking dish. Bake at 350degrees for 35—45 minutes or until set. Serve with Bourbon Sauce.

Bourbon Sauce (I double this recipe; everyone loves the sauce!):

3 Tbsp. butter
1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
1/2 c. sugar
1 c. whipping cream

1 Tbsp. bourbon
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. nutmeg

Melt butter in small saucepan; whisk in flour and cook 4 to 5 minutes or until lightly brown. Stir in sugar and whipping cream; cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in bourbon, vanilla, and nutmeg and simmer 5 minutes.

Don't Just Guess! Get a Soil Test by Kathy Attaway, JCMG

I admit I have neglected to do one of the most important things a gardener can do for his or her garden. In fact, I haven't done it for five years now and wonder why I was surprised last year when my garden was most disappointing. Being the certified Master Gardener of the neighborhood, I was a bit embarrassed as my tomatoes began to suffer and fail last spring. My neighbors proudly shared their beautiful crops of tomatoes and cucumbers with me. One day the neighbor said, "I get my soil sample checked every year. Why don't you give it a try?" It was actually the second envelope he had given me.



What's the importance of a soil test? For one thing, you will learn the degree of acidity or alkalinity in your soil, known as the soil pH. The scale runs from 0 which is highly acidic to 14.0 which is pure alkaline. For example azaleas and hydrangeas prefer a pH in the 5.0-5.5 range, slightly acidic. If the pH of the soil is not correct, then the plant has difficulty absorbing the nutrients it needs such as phosphorus, calcium, and magnesium. Your tomatoes could then be easy targets for problems such as *blossom end rot*.



A soil test costs \$10 for a routine check. You can call the Extension office and they will send you an envelope with instructions for sampling and sending the soil to the lab in College Station. The test results will tell you how much organic material is in your soil and gives you advice on what your soil does or does not need. You can submit a sample any time of the year with spring and early summer being the busiest for the lab. I guess any time is the best time, as long as you just get it done. Well, here comes my neighbor with a basket of beautiful tomatoes... and of course, another envelope! This time I'll do it!



Sunflowers

By Cecil Hightower, JCMG

One of the most striking flowers you can grow is the sunflower. These true annuals love the heat and lots of sun which, lately, we've had in abundance.

There is such a wide range of varieties now on the market that you can customize your plot by

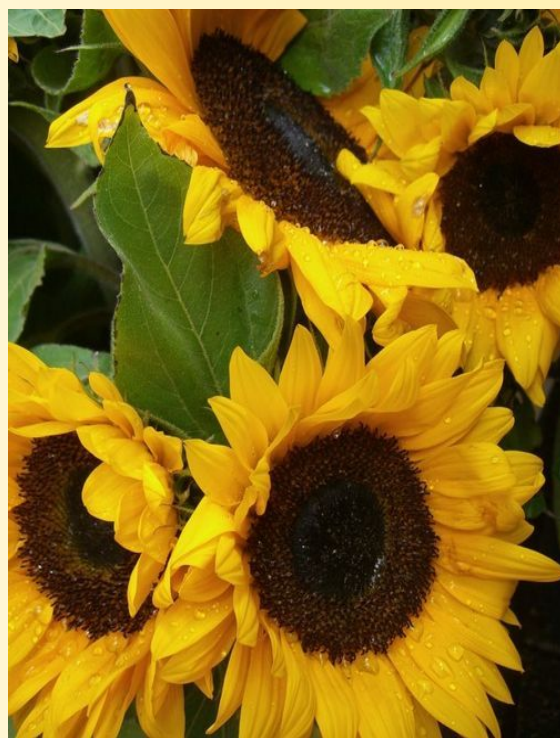


planting one that fits your available space. Most varieties grow very tall, typically from 6 to 10 feet, so they should be planted in front of a fence or in a corner in the back of your bed so they won't hide other plants. For small gardens or even border plantings there are dwarf varieties which range from 11/2 to 3 feet tall and won't overpower surrounding flowers.

Sow the seeds directly in the garden any time from spring to late summer in a spot that gets full sun. They will germinate quickly and after sprouting, fertilize and water regularly for a continuous profusion of blooms.



If you want to harvest the seeds for roasting, plant large seeded types such as 'Skyscraper' and 'Mammoth Gray Stripe.' For cut flowers, try some of the many forms bred for their colorful blooms; these can range from the iconic yellow to blossoms of gold, orange, maroon and combinations of these colors. Even the shape of the blooms can vary from a single row of daisy-like petals to soft, cushiony flowers resembling mums. Blooms can be snipped as soon as the first few petals showing color start to lift away from the flower's center and will continue to open once placed in a vase; they will last for up to 2 weeks. So, for a healthy snack or dramatic blooms, or both, try the easy to grow, multi-personality sunflower.



Texas Superstars

By Micah Shanks, JCMG



There are two new plants that have recently been given the Texas Superstar designation. They are Baby's Breath Euphorbia and that old standby, Turk's Cap. In order to be considered a Texas superstar, plants undergo rigorous testing under the watchful eye of Texas AgriLife Extension horticulturists at several locations throughout the state. They must be able to adapt to all conditions, especially the summer heat. They also must be easy to propagate so that they can be widely available and reasonably priced. Baby's breath euphorbia looks much like baby's breath gypsophila which most of us see only in the spring before the heat sets in. Euphorbia has the same wispy, cloudlike look and has a mounding effect as it grows. Easy to grow in the garden and in containers, this annual flower will enhance other plants around it and only takes moderate water.



Turks cap has been a familiar pass along plant for many years. It is a South Texas native and a favorite with hummingbirds and butterflies. In colors of red, white, and pink, it grows in full sun, full shade, any soil type, drought or flood. It is rarely bothered by pests or disease. It even withstands Roundup! The color may fade a bit, but the plant will not die. Although spring is the best time to plant turks cap, it can really be planted any time of year. It is tough, versatile and can grow in the worst Texas conditions. There are many more Texas superstars to choose from. If you want a low maintenance garden, superstars are the way to go.

"Gardens are not made by
singing "Oh, How beautiful"
and sitting in the shade."
Rudyard Kipling



Fall Garden Tips

By Cecil Hightower, JCMG

Roses love potassium and banana peels are loaded with this important nutrient. This is an easy to apply organic source, so instead of throwing those peels into the trash bin, just toss them 2-4 inches away from the stem of your roses. Gardeners who have tried this report no problems with insects or critters being attracted to the peels.

When planting vining crops, remember to plant “vertically”. You will conserve space in your garden while improving air circulation which cuts down on pests and disease. Remember, you don’t have to limit yourself to standard trellis materials. Get creative! Recycle that old ladder, broom handle, or shoe tree. Scout flea markets and garage sales for anything that would support your cucumbers and snap peas. Heavy fruits such as melons may need extra support, so secure them with slings made from recycled pantyhose

“Your first job is the prepare the soil. The best tool for this is your neighbor’s tiller. If your neighbor does not have a tiller, suggest that he buy one.” Dave Barry

Fall is a good time to evaluate your garden, really taking notice of what’s doing well and what’s not during this challenging season. Watering chores can eat up a lot of your garden time. Remember the basics: water in the morning. Water the soil and not the leaves, and water deeply and occasionally rather than shallow and often. Flowering annuals and perennials can get leggy and scraggly by now, so cut them back by 1/3 or more which will make them look neater and with fertilization a new flush of blooms will be encouraged. If an annual flower, vegetable, or herb looks sickly or is struggling, at this point in the season, just pull it up. However, if a perennial is looking awful, cut it back to just a few inches and it will come back this year or next with healthier growth. And don’t forget to keep deadheading. For most flowers, it may be necessary to do this daily. Fertilize acid loving plants such as azaleas, gardenias, blueberries and camillias that may be showing an iron deficiency indicated by yellow green young leaves. It’s best not to fertilize roses now as high heat reduces their vigor and need for food. Continue to fertilize potted annuals and perennials as constant watering flushes out nutrients. Feed with either liquid or granules, synthetic or organic, your choice. And the most important tip of all: Protect yourself from heat stroke. Work early in the morning, take frequent breaks and drink lots of water.

HALLOWEEN 2011



Japanese Maple

By Kathy Attaway, JCMG

For all out beauty and variety, try adding a Japanese Maple to your landscape this year. This tree species has showy characteristics throughout the year and is commonly used as a focal point. These small trees are valued for their individual form, smooth bark, spring, summer, and fall foliage colors, leaf shape and fine texture. Japanese maples can have hundreds of variations in color, height, width, leaf texture and shape, as well as tree shape.

For the most part, these small and graceful trees prefer moist, well-drained areas and part-shade especially when our Texas sun is bearing down during summer afternoons. Japanese maples cannot take strong, sweeping wind.

The soil should be amended, and mounded up by six inches so the roots will not be in a soggy area. Keep the soil away from the trunk. Mulch is important to conserve moisture and help protect the roots, which are not deep at all. Japanese maples also do well planted in containers. Because all cultivars are propagated by grafting, Japanese maples can be relatively expensive. However, the enjoyment of a beautiful Japanese maple is well worth it.



Extending the Season

By Micah Shanks, JCMG

Even though we have a very long growing season in Southeast Texas, many of us would like to extend the season even more, particularly when it comes to our vegetable gardens. A good way to do this is through the use of green houses and cold frames. Before purchasing a greenhouse, do your research. Decide first of all what you intend to use it for. Is it mainly for wintering over tender plants or actually starting your own seedlings? How much space do you need and of course, how much can you afford? Greenhouses come in many sizes and prices, so shop carefully. A coldframe can be a relatively inexpensive way to get your seedlings started earlier in the season and protect them from frost in the fall. Coldframes rely on the sun for heat and should be located in a southern part of the garden. Cool season crops grown in a cold frame will often continue to produce fresh greens, herbs, and root vegetables for your winter table. Coldframe kits can be purchased through seed catalogs. Instructions to build your own can be found online. There are many styles and sizes available, so once again, do your homework. Row covers and cloches are two other inexpensive and easy ways to protect your garden. Row covers can be made of fiberglass, plastic, or landscape cloth attached to a wire or wooden frame. A cloche can be as simple as a milk jug or as fancy as a glass bell that is turned upside down over individual plants. Cloches and coldframes are often lightweight enough to be moved around the garden. They can be reused year after year. Whichever option you choose will extend your growing season by keeping things warm in the winter and warming things up earlier in the spring.

Herb Magic

By Micah Shanks, JCMG

We are all familiar with culinary uses and maybe some medicinal uses of herbs, but do you know about the magical properties of herbs? Since time began, herbs have been used in religious festivals and were often dedicated to an ancient god or saint. Some were thought to offer sacred protection from illness, danger and evil. Branches of bay, for instance, were hung in churches in the middle ages to welcome good fairies and elves and ward off evil spirits. Throughout history, it has been believed that bay protects against lightning and thunder. If you need inspiration, sleep with a bay leaf under your pillow. Got a vampire problem? Wear a clove of garlic around your neck and they won't bother you. Garlic was also believed



to protect sailors from shipwreck. You can rid yourself of warts by making three crosses over them with a garlic clove. Roman soldiers chewed garlic before battle to give them courage and bullfighters took a clove into the ring to stop the bull from charging.



Rue is another herb with powerful mystical properties. According to herb lore, innkeepers gave sprigs of rue to travelers to insure safe journey. Musket balls and gun flints were soaked in rue water so they would hit their target every time. When mixed with dew which was collected at midnight, rue was believed to cure madness. Rue is associated with misfortune, so hence the saying "you will rue the day".



Dill isn't just for pickles. The diaries of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the 10th century are filled with glowing descriptions of this herb's magical powers.

Besides warding off evil, it was infused in wine to enhance passion and was also a main ingredient in love potions and charms. As you can see, herbs aren't just for the kitchen.

"When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant."

Unknown

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November 2011

“The Latest Dirt” is the official newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners. It will be published in February, May, August, and November. Members will receive color copies via e-mail. It will also be posted on our website at <http://jefferson-tx.tamu.edu>. Click on newsletters. Black and white copies will be available at the monthly meetings and at the office. Input is greatly appreciated. Call Micah Shanks at 409-749-0083 or e-mail your suggestions to mshanks52@gmail.com.

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Programs conducted by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

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