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Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners

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Agent's Two Cents *David Oates, Horticulture Agent*

The spring season is slowly approaching here in South East Texas as gardeners began to stir after our taste of winter weather this year. We are still assessing some the damage that occurred from the hard freezes that we had this year. This is one for the record books as far as temperatures were concerned. On the bright side of things, the first day of spring is only about six weeks away on March 20 ,2018. I know folks are staring to get ready for the spring season as I have seen the big box stores in Jefferson County and surrounding areas begin to start stocking spring time items in anticipation of warmer weather ahead.

The Jefferson Agrilife Extension office in cooperation with Jefferson County Master Gardeners was scheduled to have their annual Master Gardener new intern training in the month of January. Unfortunately, we decided to cancel the program this year due to low participation numbers and poor attendance. We think this is a direct result of the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, which has caused widespread

destruction of property in our immediate locale. We know that a lot of interested participants and residents are still displaced and rebuilding their homes.

Our goal here in the Agrilife Extension Program and the Master Gardeners program has not changed. We are still committed to provide quality agricultural education and educational experiences for the residents of Jefferson County and surrounding areas.

I am happy to let folks know that despite the cancellation of our Master Gardener intern education class, most of the speakers are still interested in visiting with our program and have agreed to come and be guest speakers during the year at various times. I believe this interest in the volunteer programs of the Agrilife Extension, such as the Master Gardener program, proves that these programs are of value and benefit to the community.

Be on the lookout for some of these speakers in upcoming months. We hope they and their programs will be an educational event and activity that will entice everyone to become interested in horticultural activities here in South East Texas.

Meetings are the second Thursday of each month, 6pm in the Extension Office Auditorium

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

February 8 - Dr. Mo Way, Entomologist

March 8 — TBA

April 12 — TBA

Behind The Garden Gate

By Eileen Slater, JCMG, President

What a memorable year we will have in 2018! It is the 40th Anniversary of Texas Master Gardeners Association! That is something to celebrate!

We are starting our 40th year by taking part in the new Volunteer Management System or VMS! This is our new way to document personal hours for certification. David showed us how to sign up at the January meeting. Call the office for more information on how to sign up if you missed the meeting. David needs your current email so that you can begin the process to login.

Besides documenting, adding up and categorizing your hours, there are other areas worth exploring on this website. The event calendar will list all activities for the month. Activities are written on the calendar day, so you can always check to see the date for the next monthly meeting and other activities.

The member roster has members' names, emails, phone numbers and interests. Now you can call or email other master gardeners with the same interest and share rides to the next memorable event!

The projects section describes the different activities in which one can participate.

Our county newsletter, The Latest Dirt, is placed under the Newsletter section. There is a picture under the photo album from the bulb planting work day in Nederland. Are you in this picture?

Above your Texas Master Gardener VMS page is the Texas Master Gardener Association website. This is the home page and it shares a myriad of useful information. The resources section includes the workings of the organization. The conference section holds detailed information on the annual conference.

The awards section details the rules, applications, dates and available awards. The Texas Master Gardener Newsletter alerts the membership of the most current events and submission dates to the Texas Master Gardeners Association. The last section is the state-wide calendar of events. Many opportunities exist for those wanting specialist certifications.

Now let's get ready to make this a memorable year with some activities!

Get those pruning shears out on Feb. 10th to help prune roses at Wesley UMC at 8:00 am and at McFadden Ward House at 10:00 am with the Golden Triangle Rose Society.

March 10th is an opportunity for all JCMG entrepreneurs to have a booth at their "Spring into Spring Gardening and Plant Sale" from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. The cost is \$25.00 a booth and booth items sold should be garden related.

The JCMG Vegetable Sale is March 17, 2018, from 9:00 a.m. until noon at the Test Garden. Joyce Logan, Vegetable Sale chair, will purchase plants. Because of the effects of Hurricane Harvey on members and the community, there will be a limited number of varieties.

The Spring Plant Sale is in Airport Hangar #4 on April 14, from 8:00 a.m. until noon. More decisions are being made on this sale and information will become available as soon as they approved.

The 40th Anniversary of the Texas Master Gardeners Association is April 4-6, 2018 with pre-sessions on leadership on April 3, 2018. Melissa Starr always does a great job of entering awards for our county! We have some great ones entered. Make your reservations now as hotels are filling up! Let the celebration begin!

Master Gardener of the Year—Joyce Logan

Written by Melissa Starr, JCMG

Joyce Logan, class of 2012, is from Doyline, LA, east of Shreveport, and moved to Southeast Texas in 1977 to teach mathematics at French High School. Since she retired as the Technology Director of Lumberton ISD in 2010, she finally has time to participate in Master Gardeners and take care of her own "demonstration garden" on her home place in Doyline where her mother and Grandmother instilled the love of plants in her at an early age. She and Verna

McCollum started taking care of the day lily bed five years ago and that has expanded into offering bulbs for our area at the Fall Plant Sale and the Spring Market Day Sale.

For two years, Joyce has dutifully carried out the duties of treasurer, co-chairperson for Market Day and chairperson for the fall plant sale. She devotes her time to researching plants that grow well in our area in order to educate Master Gardeners and the public through Facebook posts and plant sales. She also organized a vegetable and herb sale in early spring so the public can get plants in the ground before searing heat stunts production. For the last two years, she has attended the Horticultural Field Day in Overton each June to educate herself on new, hearty plants and guide her in what new and wonderful plants to offer the community at plant sales. To support this effort, she established an account with

Ball Horticulture so that plugs and seeds can be ordered as soon as these new plants are available from suppliers. She also trains the cashiers and creates Facebook posts to educate others about the plants we are offering so that they get the best ones that grow well in our area.

She is seen at almost every JCMG event. She also spends time working in the test garden,

watering greenhouse and container plants almost daily and teaching interns, encouraging them in their pursuit to become a Master Gardener. Keeping supplies (fertilizer, potting mix, assorted pots) in stock at the garden, so that the necessary materials are available when mem-

bers come to the garden to work, is one of the many responsibilities she has assumed. Her resourcefulness in this area has saved the JCMGs money. She has also led our chapter in purchasing, maintaining and planting flowers for our Veteran's Park Memorial Day service twice a year.

Nothing seems to stop Joyce. After she broke her arm last year, she continued to work at Master Gardener events. Even after her home was flooded by Hurricane Harvey, she tirelessly led and worked to help the community and Master Gardeners. Joyce Logan truly deserves the title of

“Master Gardener of the Year!”



Graduating Interns



Interns graduating from left to right: Vickie Rabalais, Terri Barclay; John Byerly; Debby Parker; Rebecca Harrison. Not pictured: Brenda Beadle and Charlene Mitchell



***Intern of
the Year
Debby Parker***

2018 Master Gardener Officers

President, Eileen Slater; Vice-President, Jeanene Ebeling; Secretary, Sarah Sloan; Treasurer, Marianne Kirkpatrick. At Large Members. Joyce Logan, Dorothy Norris and James Butaud (not pictured) Installed by David Oates, Agent

Freezing Weather, Sleet and Snow Challenge Gardeners By *Eileen Slater, JCMG*

Gardeners face new challenges to keep those garden plants and trees alive after sleet, snow and temperatures from the teens to 69 degrees in one week in our area!

Now you may be looking outside and saying, "What do I do now?"

1. Water: Water the dry soil of all plants including injured plants.

2. Fertilizer: Fertilize all plants in the spring once the danger of frost has passed. The approximate last frost date in Jefferson County is March 5.

3. Pruning:

Wait several days to see all plant damage. Dead foliage helps insulate plants from further injury. Scratch the branch bark of trees or woody plants with your thumbnail. Green means it is still alive. Tan or

brown shows the branch is dead. Wait until new growth begins in the spring to see dead parts of the plant. Prune the dead branches at that time. Remove mushy or slimy dead plant tissue at once. Decaying tissue is unhealthy for the plant.

4. Lawns: Lawns usually turn brown in the winter as part of their natural cycle. Apply nothing now to your lawn.

5. Container plants: Move them back to their location so that they have enough light to make the food they need to live.

6. Citrus trees: According to local citrus authorities Bonnie Childers and Eddie Wharton, temperature affects your tree survival. However, temperatures of 21 degrees or lower can kill citrus trees such as limes, Meyer lemons and Ponderosa lemons. You will begin to lose leaves. Wharton banks his too-tall-to-cover citrus trees to 18 inches around the trunk and 2-3 inches from the tree trunk. This protects the graft of the tree trunk so that the tree can survive. He plans to leave his citrus trees banked for a couple of weeks due to

forecasted cold weather. Tree trunks can get root rot if banked too long. Childers says to wait until after the last spring freeze date to check damage before you prune the tree. Prune lower limbs to hang 24-36 inches off the ground.

Turn your pruning shears upside down to cut flush with the trunk of the tree. To make the tree limb grow up, cut with the bud on the top side. After temperatures are above 32 degrees, you can pull the covers off your citrus trees, so the leaves can get some sun. Recover citrus trees when temperatures again fall to freezing.

The positive side to freezing weather, sleet and snow in the garden is that the bugs and mold are not too happy. Hopefully the insect population will diminish this year.



In Southeast Texas, Spring Time Is Azalea Time

By Kathy Attaway, JCMG

Spring time is azalea time! What a surprise when we began seeing azalea blooms popping out in February last year! In 2017, our warmer- than-average temperatures tricked most plants into early blossom. Azaleas can be found blooming from early spring through late June with reblooming azaleas continuing to bloom until the weather turns cold. These flowering shrubs provide lush foliage even when not in bloom. Azaleas are often under-used in our landscapes. To add these to your yard, begin by studying your overall landscape plan. What colors complement your house? What are the blooming times and colors of plants currently in your landscape?

Consider the space you have available. Tall varieties can grow to more than eight feet with the smallest bushes maturing at three feet. Check sun exposure. Most azaleas do best in eastern sun or filtered shade. The thicker the leaf, the more sun tolerant it is. Many of the reblooming azaleas do better in brighter light. Soil is important, too. Though azaleas prefer acidic soil, more commonly found in East Texas, they will grow beautifully in the "Golden Triangle" when planted in raised beds or in mounds of a loose soil mix that have been amended with ground bark, compost, peat moss, or leaf mold.

Before planting, soak the root ball. To encourage root growth, cut the sides with a knife on three sides, and loosen the azalea roots. Plant with the top of the root mass slightly above ground level. Mulching with pine straw or pine bark mulch helps conserve moisture, prevents weeds and provides insulation. Prune azaleas soon after blooms disappear. It is not necessary to prune azaleas every year, but if



you do, avoid late pruning. Pruning too late will remove next year's buds, normally formed by late summer. Do not shear the bush! Selectively remove shoots

by cutting the branch junction at the next largest branch. This will keep the bush more compact. Fertilize azaleas once in the spring, just after blooming, with an organic-based, acid type fertilizer, such as an azalea-camellia mix. You can fertilize azaleas up to once a month for the first three months after they have completed their bloom cycle.

Azaleas are low maintenance bushes that can enhance any landscape.

Crazy In Love With Texas' Native Wildflowers

By Eileen Slater, JCMG

"Crazy, I am crazy for loving you."

This classic country song by Patsy Cline dealt with matters of the heart. Well, I am crazy in love with Texas flowers this time of year.

My crazy love affair for Texas wildflowers began as a child riding in the car with the windows rolled down. We saw bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, yellow buttercups and pink evening primroses.

In southern Texas, the appearance of bluebonnets signaled spring and Easter. Easter, graduation and wedding pictures were taken amidst the glory of the bluebonnets.

As a Texas transplant to this area, azaleas signaled the beginning of spring. Without bluebonnets, the lovely white, pink and red azaleas became favorite backdrops for my children's pictures. I had never seen such a display of colors in bushes! Still I longed for bluebonnets in Beaumont in the spring. Last fall I finally planted three plants in a container so they would not get too wet from all the rain. Luckily, they decided to grow and bloom. A couple of weeks ago, I was rewarded with gorgeous blue and white fragrant blooms.

Their fragrance brought back many other memories of bluebonnets.

My children became the recipient of my obsession with the flower. As small children, they traipsed along the roadside highways where bluebonnets were profusely blooming. When the oldest came tumbling down a steep embankment in Victoria with scraped knees and sticker burrs, they were only allowed on more level patches of flowers.

The craziness continued when my mentor teacher suggested we take a picture of our students in bluebonnets growing along I-45 about 30 minutes to an hour outside of Dallas.

That was the beginning of many students in the bluebonnets near Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Houston and any other city where bluebonnets were growing in the spring.

Finally, there was the picture in the bluebonnets of my daughter and the Jefferson County 4-H Club members coming back from District 9 competition near Brenham.

Yes, I have had my share of lovely bluebonnet, azalea and other spring flower experiences.



For Best Results In Your Garden, Do Your Research

By Tim Schreck, JCMG

My first seed catalogs just started coming in the mail. I guess they can tell by my ZIP code that spring is just around the corner here in Southeast Texas and serious gardeners are ready to get seeds into some sort of soil.

Sit down with your catalogs and dream about the possibilities. Think of all the huge tomatoes, bushels of beans and endless ears of yellow corn you will be harvesting this year.

Now back to reality. Most catalogs from the bigger seed companies promote seeds that do best across the middle and northern parts of the United States. These are hardiness zones four to eight. As you are reading the catalogs, do not be fooled into the endless producing blueberry bush guaranteed to produce tons of berries or the three-pound tomato plant. Beaumont, Texas is usually listed in Hardiness Zone nine and many of these wonder plants cannot handle the moisture or heat in Beaumont. Many plants in the catalog will barely tolerate zone eight so you are taking a chance that it will grow well in Beaumont. If you really want to try one of these wonder vegetables, do as much research as you can before ordering.

My suggestion, to have the best chance at a great garden, is to obtain three documents specifically for Jefferson County that the Texas A& M Agri-Life Extension Service has online for you.

Get online, using any search tool, and type in Jefferson County Vegetable Gardening Guide. In the top four or five results, you will see the Jefferson County Vegetable Gardening Guide pdf. This document will get you started by giving you tips on site selection, soil preparation, fertilizing and harvesting. All this information is specific to Jefferson County and is a great starter document.



Go back to your search tool and type in Jefferson County Texas vegetable variety. Again, in the top few results you should see the .pdf Varieties for Texas and a reference to Jefferson County Master Gardeners in the text. This document

gives you several vegetable varieties we know grow well in the area. Common ones on the list are Celebrity tomatoes; Contender, Fordhook 242 and Blue Lake beans; Louisiana Green Velvet and Long Horn okra; Black Beauty and Ichiban eggplant and Dixie and Multipik squash. These were picked because seasoned gardeners, who know from experience, picked them out. They are proven to tolerate in our climate and have disease resistance giving you the best chance of success.

One last time to the search engine and do a search for Jefferson County Texas Vegetable Planting Schedule. This schedule gives the best spring and fall planting windows for each vegetable, recommended spacing be-

The Latest Dirt

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We're On The Web:

<http://txmg.org/jcmg/>

<http://jefferson.agrilife.org>



MISSION STATEMENT

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

2018 Officers

President—Eileen Slater

Vice President—Jeanene Ebeling

Secretary—Sarah Sloan

Treasurer—Marianne Kirkpatrick

At Large—James Butaud, Joyce Logan, Dorothy Norris

Past President—Tina Gonzales

Announcements

**Master Gardener Vegetable
and Herb Sale**
Saturday, March 17 8-Noon
At the Test Garden
Set up day Friday March 16, 8-am

**Master Gardener Spring
Plant Sale**
Saturday, April 14, 8-Noon
At the Test Garden
Set up day, Friday April 13, 8am

Programs in planning stages:

- ⇒ **Rose Pruning at the Test Garden, date to be announced**
- ⇒ **Citrus Pruning Demo at the Test Garden, date to be announced**
- ⇒ **Grape/Muscadine Pruning Demo at the Test Garden, date to be announced**