

The Green Thumb

<http://nacogdoches-tx.tamu.edu>

A Quarterly Horticulture Newsletter for
The Nacogdoches County Master Gardeners & Other Horticulture Enthusiasts
Spring 2008



Inside this issue:

President's Message
MG Business
Agent's Advice
Chad's Chatter
Lunch'N'Learn Schedule
Plant Sale Update
Demo Garden Update
Horticultural Happenings
Did You Know???
Special Interests
From the editor

From the President

Things are in motion on the demonstration garden. Don't miss the next workday. Also the Ag banquet is coming up (March 31st, maybe before this issue reaches you.)

Gerry Peacock

President

(Note: The meeting is set for April 7th at 5:30 p.m. in the Meeting Room at the AgriLife Extension Office.)

Chad's Chatter

Spring has sprung!!! If you look around, trees are budding, grass is growing and seeds are germinating. We have had some excellent work days in our Demonstration Garden lately. I appreciate all the hard work of our Master Gardeners with all your program and project efforts. We should have a good plant sale coming up. Don't forget our Lunch'N'Learn series started up again in A March and is going well.

Chad Gulley

County Extension Agent—Ag/NR

Agent's Advice

Whether you are a seasoned gardener or this is your first year to grow vegetables, take time now before you order your seed and supplies to plan your garden on paper. Sketching out your planned garden and deciding what crops you want to plant, will assist in avoiding the tendency to put in more than what your garden space can hold.

Most gardeners are more successful with a small garden than a large one. A gardener can grow a lot of vegetables in a 10 X 20 foot or 10X40 foot space. But as the size of the garden gets larger, so does the amount of time required to keep it cultivated, watered and give it basic care during the growing

season. Be sure there is adequate sunlight for the garden, as many crops require a minimum of 6 hours of full sun per day. Also, providing some afternoon shade can be beneficial, particularly as the season warms up during June and July.

Another important consideration is to allow adequate room for each crop. With good growing conditions, tomatoes will out grow their cages and vining crops such as cucumbers and melons will take over the walkways between rows. One way to help eliminate this problem without sacrificing production is to plant early maturing crops like onions, beet and radishes between rows of later maturing, warm season crops like the tomatoes, melons and cucumbers mentioned earlier. Once the early crops have been harvested, you can allow this extra space to become part of your walkways.

Also, practice good crop rotation. That means not planting the same or related crops in the same place year after year. This will help reduce disease and insect problems during the growing season. By putting things down on paper before you get started, even those who garden in the smallest of spaces can implement a good crop rotation plan.

Crispin Skinner

County Extension Agent



Master Gardener Plant Sale

May the 10th is coming faster than we think. And it's nearly past time to get those plants started for the Annual Master Gardener Plant Sale. Plant Sale chairmen, Tom and Dorothy Shone have plans in full swing for a most successful event. Remember, healthy house plants, hanging baskets, and common varieties of plants sell very well each year.

The schedule as of now is that plants need to be delivered to the Mall on Thursday, May 8th or Friday, May 9th. The sale will be open to the public on Saturday, May 10th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please make every effort to help with set up on May 8th and May 9th and the sale on May 10th.

Tom and Dorothy Shone

Plant Sale Coordinators

(If you have any specific questions about preparing for the plant sale, feel free to contact The Shones - 462-7717.)

Lunch'N'Learn

Yes, the monthly fun, food and educational arm of the Master Gardeners are back in full swing. Thanks to the planning of Penny Horne and Gay Thompson, a full calendar is already on tap.

Here's a peek at the line-up:
April 10th-Greg Grant-Wild Flowers
May 8th-Diane Avriett-Farmers Market
June 12th-Henry Sunda-Blueberry Farm

And other speakers for the remainder of the year will include Mike Spencer, Campbell Cox, Gregory Lide, Jeff Abt, Larry Poe and Roy Mills.

Lunch'N'Learn is a great way to get some of the required educational hours for yearly MG certification. And food preparation time counts toward meeting the volunteer hours needed. So, go ahead now and mark the second Thursday of each month on your

calendars and be at the Texas AgriLife Extension offices in the meeting room in plenty of time so that the program can start at 12 noon.

Penny Horne and Gay Thompson

Lunch'N'Learn Coordinators
(If you have any suggestions for 2009 programs, please send them to Penny or Gay. It's always good to have a few speakers waiting in the wings.)

MG Business

Dues - There is still time to pay your Master Gardener dues. Treasurer Sue Butts will gladly take your \$12 payment in either cash or as a check made out to Nacogdoches County Master Gardener Association. If you are unsure about having paid your dues, please contact Sue at 569-9277.

Master Gardener Patches – One good way to show your pride in being a certified Master Gardener is to wear clothing with the official MG patch on it. Caps, shirts, vests, coats, etc. look great with a clean, new patch on them. If you need to replace an old or faded patch or just haven't gotten around to getting yours yet, please contact Bill Teague at 559-9007 or ta1@hughes.net. Patches are \$2 each with \$0.50 of each sale going into the MG treasury.

Did you miss it? – There are a never ending number of gardening events for and by Master Gardeners in our community. Recently you may have enjoyed the hands-on grafting workshop offered by Dr. David Creech on March 18th. This was a great learning opportunity on a number of different ways to graft trees. Dr. Creech demonstrated several different techniques and then gave those present the opportunity to practice on Japanese Maples, Bald Cypress and Red Maple trees. With any luck, some of us may actually have grafted trees growing in the SFASU green house.

Also, just last week, during the annual Azalea trail activities, the Azalea Trail Symposium took place. This is just one of the many opportunities offered to Master Gardeners and others to increase their knowledge of this staple of the southern landscape.

Be sure to keep watching for Chad's reminder emails about upcoming educational opportunities. They are happening all around us!



Man pushing a wheelbarrow

The Demonstration Garden

Isn't it amazing what a little elbow grease and some purposeful direction can do??? If you haven't been by the site for the developing Demonstration Garden, then take a few minutes and run by E. Main at University. Thanks to the hard work of Chad and Crispin and a number of the Master Gardeners, the plot is taking shape.

A planning group headed by MG President Gerry Peacock is working with Dr. David Creech to get the master plan onto paper. The bald cypress trees planted earlier in the year have been staked and are taking root. Cucumbers are in the ground and azaleas are soon to join the plot. If you saw the Daily Sentinel in mid-March, a wonderful article was presented about the garden.

None of the progress so far would be possible without the time Master Gardeners and other volunteers are giving. And there are still many more opportunities to participate. **The April workday schedule has been tentatively set for April 2, 4, 11, 16 and 30, 2008. Work usually starts around 9 a.m. and lasts until early**

afternoon. This is another way to get those coveted volunteer hours each Master Gardener needs yearly. Of course, all workdays are subject to weather setbacks. So watch for updates or call the ArgiLife offices if you want more current information about a scheduled day and what the planned work will be.

Horticultural Happenings

Speaking of recently past opportunities, there are a number of great learning experiences coming in the next few months in our area.

**Saturday, April 19th
8 a.m. – 12 noon**

Spring Fling at the Farmers Market

Vendors and others will celebrate Earth Day at the Farmers Market located at the old Hitch Lot (W. Main & Pearl). In addition to the locally grown produce, flowers, fresh eggs, baked goods and hand-made crafts, a wide variety of musical acts will be present. Beginning at 8 a.m. with Chris Edwards, there will be a new performer every 45 minutes or so. Other musicians will include Cindy Grayson, Michael Collins, Paul Martinez and the Wright Family & East Texas Dulcimers. For more information about our local Farmers Market or how to become a vendor, contact Larissa Philpot at 559-2571.

**April 24 -26, 2008
2008 Texas Master Gardener
Conference**

Conroe, Montgomery County, Texas

This annual meeting is an excellent way to not only get quality educational hours, but a great way to network with other gardeners; learn what's in and out in other parts of our state; take some very informative tours and hear experts in the horticulture field.

Early registration has already closed, but to see what offerings is still available, visit the conference web site

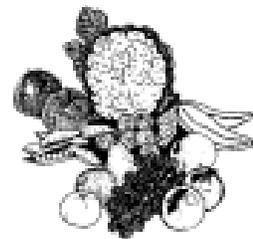
www.2008texasmastergardenerconference.org .

**Tuesday, May 27th , 9:30 a.m.
Tour of Josie's Cut Flowers**

As part of the Master Gardener course, a tour of Josie Crowson's Cut Flower Farm will be offered. Directions to Josie's are: From the East Loop at Starr, travel south on the Loop to CR 220 (about 1 mile on the left); travel east on CR 220 for 3.25 miles, staying to the right at the "T" after the 1st bridge and to the left at the "T" after the 2nd bridge. (The road number will change to CR 230, but you will not notice where that happens.) Josie's farm will be on the right just across from CR 231 – you will see a green gate with 1288 posted above & a wooden fence along the front pasture. (If you need help, Josie's numbers are 559-8787 (h) and 615-6292 (c).

**May 28 – 31, 2008
4th Lone Star Regional Native Plant
Conference**

Hosted by the Pineywoods Native Plant Center at SFA, this 3-day event will include field trips, workshops, lectures, a plant sale and much more. Early registration ends on May 7th and more information is available by contacting Elise Rodewald at 93-468-1832 or erodewald@sfasu.edu. A complete listing of the schedule and registration form is available at <http://pnpc.sfasu.edu>.



Did You Know????

- When choosing a **tree** to shade a sunny patio yet allow sun in during the winter months, choose a deciduous tree rather than an evergreen. Deciduous trees such as chinquapin oaks and lacebark elms are relatively fast growing trees that are widely adaptable.



- Do you think of **catnip** as just something to drive cats crazy? Think harder, this little plant adapts well to perennial gardens; requires little water once established and has lovely blue blooms lasting all summer long and attract numerous bees.
- Cursed or blessed with **alkaline soil**? Adding high quality compost will help to neutralize the pH and improve soil structure. And while you are waiting for the pH to change, here are some alkaline tolerant plants to use: catmint, lavender, salvia and yarrow all do well in the higher pH ranges.
- Are you sending good **plant nutrients** down your kitchen drain?? Try taking the water from your cooked veggies, such as corn and potatoes, letting

it cool and using it to water your plants. The added nutrients in this water will feed your plants.



Special Interests

The subject for the special interest section this month was a toss-up between composting and tuberous begonias. Composting won!!!

Probably all of you have some form of compost pile working around your garden area. But is it really working. In order for a compost pile to really work, it should hit an internal temperature of 130° or higher. You should feel the heat from the pile once it gets going.

According to Howard Garrett, known in the Texas garden world as “Dirt Doctor”, compost is the very best natural fertilizer and soil amendment. Anything once living will ultimately die and decompose. Therefore, good compost material includes leaves, clean hay, grass clippings, food scraps, bark, sawdust, weeds, nut hulls and animal manure – even pet waste, dead animals and greasy food from the kitchen will eventually rot and make compost. The ideal mixture is 80% vegetative matter and 20% animal waste.

Oxygen is essential, so the pile should be a mix of coarse and fine-textured materials. Turning of the pile also promotes air circulation. But be careful, while turning does speed up the

breakdown process, it also releases nitrogen and other nutrients back into the air.

The final essential ingredient is water. The more green matter in the pile the less actual water needs to be added. The pile should have the moisture content similar to that of a squeezed out sponge. This moisture allows the microorganisms – the real workhorses of the pile - to thrive, reproduce and feed on the raw materials, thus making compost. A good sign the compost is finished 'cooking' is a drop in the temperature back to 100° or less.

And just what should one do with quality compost once it is ready? First, you need to know the condition of the soil in question. Is it acidic or alkaline? If a pH adjustment is needed, then get that under control first. Once the soil is ready for other amendments remember to always thoroughly work compost or other enhancers into the soil or they may be applied as mulch to your plants.

Here are a few common household materials that can also be used as amendments in the garden or compost pile:

Coffee grounds – low in pH and good for alkaline soil; check to see if your local coffee house has any to give away.

Cornmeal – can be used to cure brown patch in St. Augustine grass as well as damping-off disease, fungal leaf spot and other fungal diseases. Use 10-20 lbs/1,000 sq. ft.

Epsom salts – fast acting source of magnesium and sulfur suitable for spraying or drenching; use 1 Tbs/gal water or 10-20 lbs/1,000 sq.ft.

Fireplace ashes – use as one of the layers in the compost pile; especially good if your pile has pine straw, oak leaves or other acidic material. Note: do not over use them.

Molasses – this sweet treat will feed and stimulate the microorganisms

in the pile; use sparingly; the effects of molasses are long term.



From the Editor

Here we are again, the quarterly newsletter for and about Master Gardeners. We want this piece to be yours, so if you have information about upcoming events or topics you'd like to see in print, please send them along to me. Our next newsletter should be out in July. So keep me posted and send any info to me no later than June 15, 2008.

There is so much of interest in the world of horticulture in our area of East Texas. One cannot help but be impacted by it. Along with many of you, I recently learned about the Texas Wildscapes program sponsored by The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The Texas Wildscapes program is a habitat restoration and conservation plan for rural and urban areas. It enables Texans to contribute to wildlife conservation by developing wildlife habitats where they live, work and play. The department offers certifications in both Texas Wildscapes and Best of Texas Backyard Habitat. For more information on Wildscapes and Backyard Habitats go to:

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/wildscapes>

Looking for that one book that just might make you think you have a personal garden consultant available at all times, then take a gander at Doug Welsh's Texas Garden Almanac. Published in 2007, this volume is like a giant monthly calendar for Texas gardeners. Divided by months, this book gives Texas

gardeners the gardening A's to Z's for any area of the state.

While Mr. Welsh's talents and knowledge range from garden column writer, radio talk-show host, TV gardening tipster to Texas A&M University professor, most Master Gardeners know him as the statewide coordinator for the Texas Master Gardener program.

Check it out and see if you need one. Then go to Amazon.com or your favorite bookstore for a copy of your own. So, until July, Happy Gardening!

Lynn Teague

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