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SCMG Association Meeting
April 11th
at 11:30 AM
at the Rose Garden Center

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Wayne's Word

We have completed the darkest season of the year—winter. When I was in Turkey it snowed every day one year from January 1st until April 2nd. When it finally stopped and the sun came out and the snow started melting, everyone had a new life and vigor about them. It was the first time that the local Turks actually acknowledged me and smiled---after 4 years. Spring was a new beginning for everyone.

The garden retailers are busy with the box stores being overrun as people rush into do their spring planting. April in East Texas is like a bride adorned in all her splendor as the Good Book says. When the Dogwoods, Azaleas, Redbuds and others bloom at the same time we are treated to the best our gardens have to offer. If for no other reason than it has been so dreary for the last few months. This morning I was working in my front yard and everyone out wanted to stop and talk. They all are anticipating the coming color extravaganza of beauty. I shared that the real beauty is it only lasts a few weeks. If it lasted for months we would take it for granted. Of course there will be other flowers and colors to enjoy throughout the coming months.

We have a busy schedule ahead of us for April. On April 1 the new class becomes interns and our current interns join the ranks and SCMG has a new beginning. The Home Garden Tour is just around the corner and we need you to man the gardens and help. The Rose City Artisan and Street Market is also fast approaching. I want to thank everyone that that has signed up as Mentors for the new class. The Texas Master Gardeners Conference will be an event to remember as it takers place the first week in April.

I urge you, if you have not already signed up, to find a place to help with the many ongoing activities. Spring is the real beginning of a busy year for SCMG's. For me it's time to get back outside doing the things that make life fun and enjoying the rewards of radiant beauty in East Texas. My mother-in-law just got 4 inches of snow in Louisville, KY. Another reason to be here in TEXAS! **Wayne Elliot, President**



DON'T FORGET!!

The April Awards Luncheon is on WEDNESDAY APRIL 11th at 11:30 AM, at the Rose Garden Center. Please contact Ann Smith, if you have not signed up to let us know, how many will be in your party and what potluck dish you are planning to bring. We need a head count in order to set up tables for all in attendance.



We are looking forward to our interns becoming certified Master Gardeners. This is our way of supporting them in all the hard work they have put in, in the past year. Also the new class members will be receiving their badges to be our new interns.

Congratulations! We are proud of all of you and appreciate the time you have spent to reach your goal. See you at the luncheon! **Janie Fowler**



Office Help

I hear it all the time. “I don’t like answering the phone at the extension office.” It’s important to realize however, that this is the number one reason that the Master Gardener program was created. In rural counties, spring gardening questions drive them crazy because nobody in the office went to school to study horticulture. On the other hand, in urban offices, spring gardening questions drive them crazy because of the sheer numbers of them. When I worked in Dallas and San Antonio, there were three phone lines dedicated to horticulture alone. Smith County falls somewhere in between the rural and the urban counties in regards to the number of gardening questions. But in modern times, the phone inquiries are only part of the mix, so I certainly need your help as regularly as possible.

In addition to phone calls, we also get gardening questions from walk in visitors and via e-mail and Facebook. This is why most urban Master Gardener groups staff a “help desk” to handle them.

My problem in the springtime is the mass quantity of folks wanting my time, and not near enough hours in the day or days in the week to get to them all. This is why despite being an avid gardener, spring is my least favorite time of the year, as I associate it with stress and bedlam. Modern technology has made the problem worse instead of better because I get questions via personal and office phones including a plethora of texts from other colleagues and county agents along with e-mail questions from two different e-mail accounts. Plus educational Facebook posts rarely go without immediate questions and AgriLife Extension has “Ask an Expert” where people from all over the world send questions. And on top of that I’ve always helped Dr. Parsons’ plantanswers.com with hard to answer questions or plant ID dilemmas. On that subject, there’s rarely a day that goes by that doesn’t include multiple “What is this?” texts or e-mails. And yes, we still get a few snail mail letters.

Dealing with all of these is the main reason I’ve never been able to write a new article, magazine article, newsletter article, or blog “on the clock.” And now that I’m married, I can’t write them “off the clock” either! If you are a gardening “expert” of any kind, every man, woman, child, stranger, friend, and relative will line up to throw questions at you in the spring, so here are the some pointers on how to deal with them.

1. If you don’t know the answer, say so. But tell them you will try and find out. Write down their information on the info sheets provided at the Master Gardener desk including their question, address, phone number, and most important of all, their e-mail address! There’s an extension publication dealing with almost every subject out there, so you don’t have to know the answer. You just need to get the appropriate publication to them. If you don’t know how to save an attachment from the aggie horticulture website and attach it in an e-mail you need to learn because that’s how most publications are sent these days. Plus, it’s much more efficient to answer in a short e-mail than a long drawn out conversation or game of phone tag.
2. Also send them a list of the certified arborists, landscape professionals, and horticulturists which is in a folder on the MG computer desk top as well (Keith Hansen is for hire!). Unfortunately the only site visits I have time for are for landscape professionals and nurserymen. If you are sitting at the MG desk with nothing to do, stock the folder with current publications from Aggie Horticulture or Aggie Turf. And while you are at it, you can make copies to stock the display rack with.
3. Please do not take a message and put it on my desk as these get buried with a constant barrage of other messages and questions. Research and find the answer and get back with them. I once left a job with 100 messages stacked on my desk waiting to get called back. Folks get angry when they don’t hear back.
4. I don’t try to search Aggie Horticulture or Jerry Parsons’ Plant Answers. I just Google “Blueberries Texas A&M,” “Asian Lady Bugs Texas A&M,” or whatever the question might be, and generally the most current publication from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is among the top finds. Do not send non-university information or outdated information.
5. Some questions are better served by others. Timber, tree, and forestry questions can be referred to the Texas A&M Forest Service or one of the local certified arborists on our list. If there’s a questions about plant diseases provide them the link and form for the Texas A&M Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in College Station. This can easily be attached in an e-mail as well. Many just need a copy of our fruit and nut spray schedule, recommended fruit and nut varieties, or landscape plant list. These are all easily attached in an e-mail. If they don’t do e-mail they can come by the office to pick them up or they can be mailed to them. Make sure you know how to use the copy machine as well. Also remember the secretaries have many other responsibilities other than horticulture, so try and handle as much of it yourselves as possible.
6. If for some reason you find yourself bored at our office, my demonstration beds around the Cotton Belt Building always need attention (as do my pot plants), the trash around the building always needs to be picked up, my bluebird boxes need monitoring, and the sidewalks always need be blown. We will treat the area around our building as an urban public garden to show everybody that they can grow something. It will mainly feature Texas Superstar plants and Earth Kind roses.Greg

HEAR YE, HEAR YE!!

Our Master Gardener Awards Luncheon is fast approaching. This is the time when our interns become certified Master Gardeners and the new class members become Interns;. Also, awards are announced.

The date is April 11th, 11:30 AM, in the Rose Garden Building. We try to begin serving at 11:30 so I would suggest you plan to be present at 11:15. If you want a chair to sit in, a table to sit at and a fork to eat with---now is the time to RSVP to Ann Smith, smith-vae@aol.com. We need a head count (count yourself as one) plus how many in your party.

Give me a hint what you plan to bring to share so we won't all bring beans - tho' beans are delicious!. Remember, you will need to bring your serving piece as well. Let me know right away before you forget. See you soon. *Ann Smith*

**MG at the Library****April 13, 2018**

This free lecture at the Tyler Public Library will be presented by MG Andie Rathbone at 11:30 AM. Her presentation is entitled *Pass-along Plants*.

**SPRING GARDENING CONFERENCE**

The Smith County Environmental Education Horticulture Committee is sponsoring a Spring Gardening Conference on Saturday, April 14, from 9-12, at The Hub, 337 East Ferguson in downtown Tyler.

Speakers include Greg Grant, Smith County Horticulture Agent, Texas A&M Extension Service, and Bob Byers, Director of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden.

They will cover basic landscape design and principles for creating beautiful gardens.

Cost: \$15.00**Contact:** (903) 590-2980 for more information.

The Board of Directors met on March 16, 2018. The following action items were discussed:

- The Home Garden Tour Committee continues to sell ads for the event brochure. Members should be encouraged to visit sponsors and let them know we appreciate their business.
- The Board agreed to review issues associated with sales tax remittance and ensure that SCMG is in compliance with Texas regulations.
- A VMS presentation will be given to the intern class on March 29. Members may also attend to receive additional training if needed.
- Plans are in place for the April 11 Awards Luncheon. The meeting date was changed due to the TMGA Conference in College Station, April 4-6.
- The Board is considering ways to assist with answering gardening questions coming into the AgriLife office.
- The Board agreed to sponsor a dinner for Texas Horticulture Agents during their meeting in Smith County in late May. A budget amendment of up to \$2,000 was approved for the dinner. *Susan Stone*

June 2, 2018 - Annual Garden Tour - 9 AM - 3 PM

A unique opportunity to view five private gardens and landscapes. This year's gardens showcase a variety of landscaping designs and styles....ranging from a lake setting to a small intimate garden. The 2018 Tour Gardens include:

- Barone Garden - 910 S. Chilton
- Dugan Garden - 628 Whittle
- Reuter Garden - 1025 Arlington
- Russell Garden - 16411 Caddo Trail, Bullard
- Atchley Garden - 16088 Treasure Cove, Bullard

Tickets \$10 in advance, \$15 the day of tour. Advance tickets on sale May 1 - June 1 include: Brookshire's Rice Road, Potpourri House, Blue Moon Gardens, Anderson's Gardens & Gifts Flint, and at the Extension Office.



Looking Ahead...

SFA Garden Gala Day Plant Sale

April 7, 2018—9 AM—2 PM

SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center

2900 Raguet St., Nacogdoches,

Shop a variety of rare Texas natives, heirlooms, perennials and exclusive SFA introductions.

Trails & Trellises – “A Garden Tour”

9 AM until 3 PM – April 28, 2018

Piney Hills Louisiana MGs – Minden, LA

Four Beautiful Gardens – MG Plant sale at 1202 Homer Road, Minden, LA – Advance Tickets \$10 or day of sale \$12.

For advance tickets email phlmg.minden@gmail.com

Colin County MG Plant Sale

Come celebrate Earth Day and the beginning of spring at The 15th Annual Plant Sale on Saturday, April 21, 2018 from 9am – 3pm. This special event will once again be held in the Show Barn at beautiful Myers Park & Event Center in McKinney. And, savvy gardeners know the CCMGA Plant Sale offers the best plants, at the best prices!

For more information on these and other events, go to:

<https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/>

How to support Smith County Master Gardener Events!

When you are on Facebook

1. Like the Smith County Master Gardener Facebook page
2. SHARE THE POST!
3. Comment on the posts regularly
4. Instead of liking-- SHARE THE POST

This will help the Smith County Master Gardener page be seen more on Facebook!



Smith County Master Gardeners attended Landscape Design School Series XXV Module 4 at College Station and visited with Dr. Bill Welch during one of the breaks. Pictured from L-R in the back are Valerie Swords, Dr. Welch, Heather Stephens, Delane Caesar-Sykes and in the front L-R, Debby Watkins, Denise Rasco.



Photo by Greg Grant

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Smith County Master Gardener intern class #25 enjoying the SFA Ruby Mize Azalea Garden in Nacogdoches. Photo by Greg Grant