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Inside This Issue

Pickin' Wildflowers, etc.	2
Board Of Directors	3
Write a Newspaper article	3
Things to do at the office	3
AgriWorld 2018 Meeting	3
SFA Lecture series	3
Coming Events	4



SCMG Association Meeting
June 7th
at 11:30 AM
at the Rose Garden Center

MG Grapevine Staff
Martin Davis, Editor

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Janie Fowler, Jean Smith and Susan Stone.

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Wayne's Word

What a great time to be a gardener. The only problem we have is ---where is the rain? Greg says it will probably rain in the fall. Such optimism! This is not a good time to have a sprinkler issue. I was leaving town last Friday and my sprinkler controller stopped working. So because of a lack of time, I called irrigation companies to see if they could repair it. They were happy to do so---I could get an appointment in June. Yard would be dead by then. So I replaced it and left town. Still a great time to be a gardener.

We have had a few comments about the new work hours and Continuing Education (CE) requirements in 2019. Smith County Master Gardeners (SCMG) is respected in the State of Texas as a leader. Especially in our association size grouping. We are certainly not the largest county MG association. But last month at the state conference we won our share of awards in the state.

There are over 200 demonstration gardens managed by MG's in the state of Texas. I have not seen many of those demonstration gardens, but the ones I have seen are not near the refined level of our gardens. As for volunteer hours SCMG is on the low end when compared to other counties.

We certainly have gardens to be proud of. But it takes many people, each doing their part to keep our gardens at such a high level of beauty. We have award winning gardens and programs that the people in Smith County can be proud of.

I am writing from Louisville, Kentucky. This morning I was at a nursery with my sister-in-law and was talking with a group of ladies. One of them had seen our gardens and really was impressed with the fact that our gardens are maintained by volunteers. I bragged on you saying that we had PROFESSIONAL volunteers and I really believe that. I want to thank each of you for your part as a SCMG. Your reputation is known far, and wide, even outside the borders of Texas. In order to keep our reputation and improve our gardens and association the Board of Directors feels increasing volunteer hours and CE's is a step in the right direction. This increase will bring us to be more in line with other counties and still not be the county with the most volunteer hours required.

We have entered a busy time of the year for SCMG. The Home Garden Tour is in less than two weeks. The team has done an excellent job planning and preparing for this event. "The Award Winning Bulbs to Blooms" conference team has met and action and planning has started. AgriWorld has its first meeting coming up. I would urge you to call the project coordinator if you are still looking for something to do in these areas.

It's A Great Time to Be a Smith County Master Gardener! *Wayne Elliot, President*

SCMG Association Meeting

The June monthly meeting will be on Thursday, June 7th at the Rose Garden Center in the Rose Room at 11:30.

The speaker will be Wayne Elliot, our very own SCMG president. Subject is to be determined. A big THANK YOU to Wayne for volunteering to speak at our next meeting.

Hope to see all of you at our Home Garden Tour and also at the first planning committee meeting for AgriWorld. These are both great opportunities for all of our Interns to not only get hours, but to see what goes into these projects to make them successful.

Janie Fowler



Pickin' Up Wildflowers and Puttin' Em in My Pocket Prairie

By Greg Grant



I was born in love with flowers. I can't remember if the first ones I loved were garden flowers or wildflowers, but there's no doubt that wildflowers are close to my heart. And Texas is certainly blessed with her fair share. I think this love with untended nature is probably what shaped my entire thinking about gardening and horticulture. Whereas many traditional horticulturists were trained to "make" things work through science and chemistry, I've always felt it was my job to blend in with nature by finding plants that already knew how to look after themselves and play well with others.

Though I've loved many a non-native plant (*Narcissus* and *Lycoris* for example) I've long said it wouldn't bother me a bit if they came out with a green law saying we could *ONLY* use native plants in our landscapes.

With almost no access to public gardens, nurseries, catalogs, or skilled gardeners, I turned to the fields, forests, and roadsides as a budding young gardener. I didn't know all their names but I certainly appreciated their caution to the wind beauty. I also didn't have access (nor do I now) to a sprinkler system, handyman-gardener, or lawn care service. And as a subscriber to *Organic Gardening* magazine as a youth, I've never been keen about widespread pesticide use in the garden.

In addition to the flowers, one couldn't help but notice the birds, bees, and butterflies along with them. Little did I know then how critical native plants and local ecosystems were to their success and survival.

Fast forward a half century. After getting two degrees in horticulture, working at four different botanical gardens and several different nurseries, and having the opportunity to dabble with a myriad of horticultural chemical supplements and gadgets, guess what my favorite plants are? Yep. *Wildflowers*.

I never lost my love for them, but a plethora of debilitating surgeries combined with an ongoing critical degradation of the nature I knew as a child (not to mention common sense and maturity) have led me to a point in my life where I'm seriously dedicated to helping the wildscape. It's amazing that it survived perfectly fine on its own for tens of thousands of years until we came along and mucked it all up.

I'm currently engaged in a number of ecologically minded reclamation/recreation/restoration projects, including invasive plant control, a longleaf pine savanna pollinator planting, a hardwood forest, a tall grass prairie, a bird sanctuary, a rain garden, and a trillium preserve; but the one closest to my heart is my quarter-acre "pocket prairie." Pocket prairies are literally small pockets of land (as small as individual pots or flower beds, which I call "postage stamp prairies") containing native prairie plants supporting native wildlife, maintained in a natural state.

Around 2007, while my Smith great grandparent's old dogtrot farm house ("Big Momma's") was being restored, I set aside a quarter of the one acre homeplace for local wildflowers that I collected along the farm to market roadside that ran in front of the house.

I had long admired the local wildflowers that grew along this very road and knew that thanks to traditional highway mowing the most diverse collection clung to the edge of the woods and along fence rows, and telephone poles. I also knew that the amazing range of East Texas wildflowers was very much different from the famous Central Texas wildflower palette I learned to love while living in College Station, Dallas, and San Antonio.

It's painfully obvious that highway roadside maintenance is based on low bid twice a year mowing contracts and automotive safety, not wildlife or wildflower diversity or aesthetics. Other than my plan to split the roadsides in half to only mow the portion next to the roads in spring (allowing fall bloomers on the back half) and the entire thing in the fall, I don't see any realistic change coming to our highway maintenance. Sadly this maintenance regime only caters to cool season, winter growing, spring blooming wildflowers. As pretty as they may be, there are many more in mother nature's bounty.

My pocket prairie is mowed (or burned) once a year, allowing a full season's worth of flowers and pollinators. I started by killing off as many of the existing invasive plants that I could (in my case Chinese privet, mimosa, and bahiagrass) using a chain saw and herbicide. Then each year I would transplant and seed different native wildflowers as I gained access to them. Like any native restoration project, thing went slow at first. To this day my father refers to it as my "weed patch" and often offers to mow it for me. To make it look like it was intentional and not neglected, I made brackets on the four corners out of old iron beds to frame it.

The annual and perennial wildflowers have proliferated the fastest. The native grasses have come the slowest. And since I do a control burn in the late winter, my pocket prairie caters to summer and fall wildflowers and perennials since any cool season annuals (like bluebonnets) are killed by the fire. Certainly in most landscapes, mowing or shearing would have to take the place of burning. The beauty of burning however is controlling winter weeds like invasive annual ryegrass, vetch, and Queen Anne's lace which dominate our local roadsides. Burning also exposes bare soil for wildflower seed to germinate in the spring as well as making nutrients immediately available.

Although my original inspiration was the local combination of drooping purple coneflowers (*Echinacea sanguinea*) and Carolina larkspur (*Delphinium carolinianum*), my biggest success stories have been white false indigo (*Baptisia alba*), rough gay feather (*Liatris aspera*), and false foxglove (*Agalinis purpurea*), the host plant for the buckeye butterfly. I didn't even plant the false foxglove. They just appeared! That's the beauty of native restoration projects. Unlike ornamental gardens (which I still love by the way) where things are generally taking a turn for the worse, in properly planned wildscape projects, things generally get better and better with all sorts of pleasant surprises to salve the soul and pat the back. -Greg





BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING NOTES

The Board of Directors met on May 18, 2018.

The following action items were discussed:

- The Treasurer's Report indicated a loss of \$1658. The loss was anticipated since the majority of SCMG revenue comes from the bulb sale which is held in October.
- Both the Home Garden Tour and the 2019 Calendar are proceeding according to plan. The Calendar is anticipated to be available for sale around September 1, 2018.
- Work on "From Bulbs to Blooms" is in progress.
- In addition to changes at the Heritage Rose Garden, modifications to the Shade and Sun Gardens are also being considered. Additional funds may be required as plans are finalized.
- The Board approved a modification to the budget of up to \$600 for a lunch during the Texas Superstar Specialist training. SCMG is the local AgriLife host for the event which will be held in September.

Susan Stone

Write a Newspaper Article?

Summer temperatures will be upon us soon and many do not want to be outside in the heat. Here is an idea and you can do it in the comfort of air conditioning while supporting the Smith County Master Gardener Association. Consider writing an article for the newspaper. It only has to be 200 words, more or less. Our organization has been very fortunate to have a presence in the local paper and we would like to see it continue.

There is probably a topic or plant you would like to learn more about; so while you are researching it, write up a quick article and submit it to SCMG. Just think: You can earn volunteer hours (research and writing), a CE for your article and stay out of the summer heat. Send articles to Jean Smith, smithjean17@hotmail.com.

Be aware Greg's column AND the MG article are downloaded to the SCMG website. A lot of people no longer take the Tyler paper and this is a way to get the information. Go to <https://txmg.org/smith/garden-notes/newspaper-columns/> to view the articles. *Jean Smith*

Things to do at the Extension Office

Greg Grant

1. Study the horticulture and events portions of our county website (smithagrilife.org) to make sure content is up to date and there are no mistakes. Tell Tina to make any changes needed to add current publications we need from Aggie Horticulture. Also make sure my Tyler Morning Telegraph newspaper articles are posted along with a monthly list of things to do.
2. Maintain our demonstration beds on the corners (and front) of the Cotton Belt Building as a mini-urban public garden. There's always trash to pick up, flowers to dead head, weeds to pull, mulch to apply, sidewalks to sweep/blow, etc.
3. Make sure currently needed publications are stocked on the display shelf in the Master Gardener office and current events flyers are available on the table in the office and on the bulletin board outside the office and in our meeting room. Go to aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu to find publications. Save important ones the folks frequently ask for in our publications folder on the computer desk top.
4. Ask secretaries if there are any outstanding phone calls or e-mails that need to be returned regarding gardening.
5. Water plants in my office window with half strength Miracle Grow, along with those in Tierny's office and our office terrarium.
6. Groom pot plants as needed to show the public what house plants/office plants should look like.
7. Clean up/tidy up Master Gardener office/library.
8. Ask Greg if there are any articles he's writing that need to be proofed.
9. Clean up meeting room and put up Master Gardener Awards, gardening posters, etc. Decorate Master Gardener bulletin board.
- 10.. Create terrarium for Master Gardener office. We have an empty one.
11. Pot REAL plants for windows in Master Gardener office.
12. Tidy up/clean up storage room.

AgriWorld 2018

Please join us for our first AgriWorld meeting on June 14 at 1:30 pm. At the Ext. office, Room 114. This is when we brainstorm and come up with the projects to work on this summer before set up in September.

Please come to help make this year's AgriWorld "Our Secret Garden" a huge success! Looking forward to having many new and old faces there! Thank you! *Laurie Graham*, AgriWorld Chair

SFA Lecture Series—June 14, 2018

Agriculture Building, 1924 Wilson Drive, S.F.A. University, Nacogdoches, TX 75962. 6:30 refreshments/social, 7:00 PM lecture followed by exciting plant raffle!

Darren Duling, Mercer Arboretum, Houston, TX "Orchids Underfoot; Flora of the Island of Crete."

June 2, 2018 - Annual Home Garden Tour

- 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 \$15 the day of tour. 9AM—3PM

June 5, 2018 -CANNING BASICS PROGRAM

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Presented By: Jenna Anding, PhD, RD Professor & Extension Specialist.

Hosted by: Anderson County AgriLife Extension Horticulture Committee and Anderson County Master Gardeners Date & Time Tuesday, June 5, 2018 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Cost \$5.00 per person Location Ben E. Keith Community Room 2019 W. Oak, Palestine, TX. RSVP by 10 a.m. June 4th Please call Anderson County Extension Office 903-723-3735.

For more information on these and other events, go to: <https://txmg.org/smith/coming->

June 7, 2018 Summer Series

The Henderson County Master Gardener Association is proud to announce the first presentation in their annual Summer Series. Jim Kracht, a Brazos County Master Gardener, will share his knowledge and expertise on 'Plant Propagation'. This program will be presented on Thursday, June 7, from 6:30 – 8:00 pm, at the Athens Senior Citizens Center, 3344 Hwy 31 E, Athens (next to the arena). It is free and open to the public. For more information, please call 903-675-6130, email hendersoncmga@gmail.com or visit our website: txmg.org/hendersonmg.

June 28, 2018 – Horticulture Field Day – Overton**Free Admission**

Once again Dr. Brent Pemberton will showcase an array of Ornamental Plants in the field where they will be evaluated. For more information go to <https://flowers.tamu.edu/field-day/>

A team of Smith County Master Gardeners have participated by planting seeds, transferring the seedlings to pots and finally to the field.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN SCHOOL SERIES XXVI, COURSE I September 24-25, 2018 George H. W. Bush Presidential Library theater in the Rotunda (free parking) College Station, TX



Master Gardeners take note. Specialist Training events are regularly available. For complete information on the Specialist Training opportunities listed below go to <https://texas.volunteersystem.org/users/index.cfm> go to Newsletters/ Documents and click on "Upcoming Events" for the list of events.

Master Gardener Specialist Training

Greenhouse Management - June 28, 29 & 30, 2018 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Tarrant County 1801 Circle Dr., Fort Worth, Texas 76119. The class is primarily centered on hobby greenhouse for more specialized situations. Registration fee: \$225.00 NO LATER than June 18, 2018.

Junior Master Gardener Specialist Training—July 24-26, 2018 The classes are held at the Global Spheres Center at 7801 S. Interstate 35E in Corinth, Texas, just south of Denton. This [dynamic and intensive 2-1/2 day training conference](#) is designed for those who are coordinating or supporting JMG programs at the local, county, and regional level. The registration fee is \$225.00. [We must receive payment by July 13.](#) For more information go to <https://dcmga.com/events/2018-junior-master-gardener-specialist-training/>.

Texas Superstar Plant Specialist Training—September 18 - 20 , 2018

Hosted by Smith County Master Gardeners Association

Master Gardener Specialist Training Composter—December 5 - 7, 2018

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension – Fort Bend County 1402 Band Road, Suite 100 Rosenberg, TX 77471