

MG Grapevine

<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

Vol. XXVII No. 7

July 2020



**The next
SCMG Association meeting is
Wednesday, August 12, 2020**

MG Grapevine Staff

Martin Davis, Editor

MG Grapevine Contributors:

Greg Grant, Debby Watkins, Henry Burch, Janie Fowler Mary Jo Madden and Susan Stone.

Published for the Master Gardeners of Smith County, Texas under the auspices of the Smith County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, 1517 W. Front St. Tyler, TX 75702.

Educational programs of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension are open to all individuals without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

Extension Office

Phone - 903-590-2980

Fax - 903-590-2984

Debby's Digressions...



As I sit and ponder on what to write this month, I feel so blessed to be a part of such an amazing group of folks. As we begin to ease back into our activities the enthusiasm displayed by everyone is uplifting. Together we

will figure out what the "new normal" will look like for us.

I hope you had a chance to watch the 2020 Graduation and Awards Video that was produced to recognize the new Interns of Class 27, the newly Certified Master Gardeners of Class 26 and the 2019 SCMGA Award recipients. Since we could not have a meeting in April, May, and June the video was our way of acknowledging the accomplishments of all these wonderful folks. The certificates, name badges, and directories that ordinarily are passed out at the Luncheon are going to be mailed to the membership. Our next membership meeting is not till August and, if nothing changes, we are working on plans to be able to hold it, though not like you are used to as we will be maintaining social distancing.

As I mentioned last month, I hope you haven't developed new routines that will preclude you from your involvement with the rest of us master gardeners! As an incentive, *FOR THE 2020 YEAR ONLY*,

the Board of Directors voted to lower our number of required hours to the state minimum so that Currently Certified Master Gardeners will need 12 volunteer hours and 6 continuing education hours (not 24/9). The Newly Certified Master Gardeners of Class 26 will only need to complete 9 volunteer hours and 4 continuing education hours from April 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020. BUT...this is not a blanket reason to not participate in the association's activities this year. Everyone who has not obtained any continuing education hours is encouraged to take advantage of the numerous online opportunities for continuing education and those who have not obtained any volunteer hours are encouraged to get involved with volunteer activities as we ease back into them. **The New Interns of Class 27** have had their requirements for April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2020 also lowered to the state minimum so they will need to obtain 50 volunteer hours, not 72 hours, in various association activities. The revised Intern Requirement Sheet has been distributed to them and the mentors and is posted on both the SCMGA website (password-smithmg) and on VMS.

And, don't forget, we still have our VMS Incentive Program. Even though there will not be a membership meeting in July, a \$25 gift card will still be awarded to TWO of you lucky folks who entered hours into VMS in June as an added incentive since we haven't been able to do it.

Continued on page 3

SCMG Meeting Information

Here we are, in the midst of a pandemic. And there's lots of change! One of the changes impacts our upcoming meeting dates. In order to be able to provide a safe environment for our members, we are going to be having our August monthly meeting in the Camellia Room at the Tyler Rose Center. This room can seat 100 within social distancing guidelines. Hand sanitizer is available. Face masks are recommended. There's no reason to not be safe!

But the change is the date. In order to be able to meet these safety needs, we have moved our monthly meeting to **Wednesday, August 12**. Mim Hershey and Katy Barone will present on the Junior Master Gardener Program. Please join us, as we all stay safe - together!

Also, a heads-up to everyone. Our October meeting had also been scheduled outside of our normal first Thursday. We will meet on Tuesday, October 6th, in order to have a safe environment. Please update your calendars!

Looking forward to seeing everyone!

Mary Jo Madden



Thanks

By Greg Grant

Thanks to the devoted work of Susan Stone, we are starting up the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Master Gardener *Help Desk* again in August. Since I receive, on average, one hundred assorted gardening questions a week, the dedicated group that runs the

Help Desk for me is responsible for any sanity that I have left.

Knowing the answer to folks' questions isn't near as important as getting all the details, letting them know that you'll work on finding the answer, and getting back to them. We'll be having more training sessions each year to help deal with the most common questions, answers, and available resources.

In the meantime, I highly encourage all Smith County Master Gardeners to read Neil Sperry's E-Gardens newsletter which deals with many of the very same questions and problems that we have. It also features my good friend Steven Chamblee, director of the Longview Arboretum and Nature Center. I also want you to subscribe to and read every issue of *Texas Gardener* magazine which in the past mainly featured vegetables and fruits but now includes ornamentals and landscaping as well. Not many states have their own gardening magazine so we are lucky indeed.

I've been writing for *Texas Gardener* for almost a quarter of a century now. And with its new owner and new look, it's better than ever, especially for we folks in East Texas, since former Smith County horticulturist, Keith Hansen, writes for them now too. There's also friend and Aggie classmate, Skip Richter, who has been a county horticulturist in a number of counties. And I just found out that my friend and former boss, Dr. David Creech from SFA Gardens, will start writing for them. In addition, several of our very own Smith County Master Gardeners have written recent articles. *Texas Gardener* is actually catering to Texas Master Gardeners and generally features an article relating to Master Gardeners in each issue.

Due to my urging, the Smith County Master Gardener board of directors decided at a recent meeting to give one CE to those that subscribe to and READ each issue of the magazine. It's a great way to stay up to date on horticulture with some of the state's best experts as well as be in tune with both the Junior Master Gardener program and other Master Gardeners around the state. *Texas Gardener* magazine (texasgardener.com) offers a subscription discount for certified Texas Master Gardeners. Contact them for more information. They also offer an online version. The key to being both a good gardener and an enthusiastic Master Gardener is keeping up with the latest science, techniques, and inspiration. Our very own *Texas Gardener* magazine is a good start

-Greg

Board of Directors

The June 18th Board of Directors meeting was held via Zoom, in compliance with the Texas AgriLife Guidelines.

The Board approved the Budget Amendment presented by Terri Gerber and committee for the Smith County Master Gardeners Greenhouse Project. It was agreed that no money will be spent until further contact and additional plans are confirmed with the City of Tyler.

As an incentive for reporting Volunteer and Continuing Education hours for the month of June, the board agreed to have a drawing for two gift cards. To be eligible for the drawing, members must enter a minimum of three hours on VMS.

Preparations are being made to have the August Monthly Membership Meeting at the Rose Garden Center. An area will be set up to accommodate 100 members as long as social distancing is in place.

The Board agreed to have all Graduation and Award Certificates mailed to recipients. Also members should be receiving their 20-21 Membership Directory in the mail. The office is still waiting for an update on the availability of name tags for Class 27.

The Calendar Committee is hard at work on the 2021 Calendar and Garden Guide preparing it to be sent to the printer and ready to sale in September.

Plans are moving forward on both the East Texas State Fair Exhibit and From Bulbs to Blooms.

The Board agreed with Greg's suggestion to allow members to obtain Continuing Education hours for reading *Texas Gardener* magazine. Members may obtain 1 CE for each issue read.

-Janie Fowler





Everyone knows the stated mission of the Master Gardeners, right? According to our website, “The Master Gardeners of Smith County are specially trained volunteers working through the Smith County AgriLife Extension office to provide horticultural information and help to the citizens of Smith County.” The key is providing horticulture information and we do that in a variety of ways: from managing demonstration gardens in The Tyler Botanical Garden; to educating youth via Discovery Texas; to publishing horticulture information in our yearly calendar and weekly newspaper articles; to lectures, conferences, garden tours and Facebook posts. All of these efforts constitute a significant effort to educate the public on horticultural information and practices.

There is one more effort, of course, and in some ways the most important – The Help Desk. It’s a one-on-one consultation process for people who have a gardening problem and don’t know where to turn. They call the Help Desk looking for information, solutions or direction. This is especially true during spring and fall planting times or when an outbreak of disease or insects occurs in the Community. Being able to help someone is very rewarding and people are (mostly) very grateful.

It can be a little scary...we don’t always have the answer and sometimes we make mistakes. But we have excellent research tools and archives of answers to previous questions. There is a method to the madness and Greg is always there to help. Although the Help Desk has been “socially distanced” for several months, it has continued to offer help and advice to the public. God willing and if the creek don’t rise, the Help Desk will be back live in the AgriLife office at the beginning of August.

So, consider this as your personal invitation to step up and help out. If you’ve been trained and worked the Help Desk before, just send an email to SmithMGHelpDesk@gmail.com and let us know when you can work a 3 hour shift (Monday through Friday, morning or afternoon). Plan to attend our “Welcome Back” training session in early August and see what’s new. If you haven’t been trained, this session will help you get started.

The Help Desk is a vital component of our mission to educate the public. Please do your part in making it a success. Watch the weekly E-blast for information on the “Welcome Back” training session and be sure to sign up.

Susan Stone

Debby Digressions—from page 1

The winners will be announced in the Friday e-blast and the gift cards mailed to the lucky recipients (or given to you when MJ sees you while you’re earning more hours!).

We are back working in the gardens. For the month of June, we were working in all gardens twice a week to try and bring the gardens back to some semblance of normalcy. In July the regular schedule will be resumed with no limit on how many can be in the gardens; whereby the Heritage Rose Garden and IDEA Garden will work on Tuesday morning and the Shade Garden will work on Wednesday morning and the 1st and 3rd Saturday morning. It’s easy to spread out in the gardens and practice social distancing. Plus, it’s really peaceful, beautiful, and the comradery and work are soothing.

The Help Desk is going to need some “help” as it gears back up to serving the community from a presence in the office. Training is going to be offered on how to do it. Stay tuned. The Calendar Committee, Bulbs to Blooms Conference and Sale Committee, and the East Texas State Fair Committee have been busy in the background working on their activities. Keep your eyes and ears open for announcements about their upcoming meetings to really kick things into high gear. None of these activities may look like they have in the past as the committees are being innovative and creative in producing them in this COVID-19 environment. That’s just testimony to what I said about this being an amazing group of folks! And to top it off, we’ve learned how to hold Zoom meetings, do online sign-ups with Sign-up Genius, and earn Continuing Education hours online. Who said old dogs can’t learn new tricks!

Please continue to be safe during this unconventional time... *Debby Watkins*, President

International MG Conference

Leading researchers. Industry experts. Master Gardeners from across the nation. Six days of tours, workshops, and education in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

International Master Gardener conferences are held every two years and provide an opportunity for members of the public, Extension Master Gardeners, and Extension specialists to come together and learn through seminars and tours, while also convening committee meetings and exchanging ideas and concerns.

Link to the 2021 International MG Conference <https://www.internationalmastergardener.com/>

Join us September 12-17, 2021 in Norfolk Virginia!



Heritage Rose Garden Update

While we were gone during the quarantine, the Heritage Rose Garden was blooming its heart out! The roses were spectacular and have finished their first flush of blooms. The reseeding annuals (bluebonnets, Aggie bluebonnets, larkspur, poppies, Aggie poppies, old fashioned petunias, black-eyed Susan's) did their thing and sprouted without any assistance from us. The old-fashioned perennial coneflowers spread themselves profusely since we weren't there to contain them! The spring bulbs were gorgeous. The Byzantine gladiolus were breathtaking as usual. However, the weeds ran rampant in some beds and it has taken a multitude of hands twice a week in June to try and remove them and control the spreading perennials and reseeding annuals. The plans we had for improvement have been put on the back burner to do the much-needed routine maintenance. Hope to see you in the garden on Tuesdays at 8:30 AM in July!

Debby Watkins and Henry Burch



And, the winner is.....

Even though there was no April meeting where the annual awards were announced, there were awards. The list included:

MG of the Year, **Debby Watkins**; Intern of the Year, **Belinda Kromer**; MG w/most hours, **Janie Fowler**; Intern w/most hours, **Belinda Kromer**; Lifetime Award, **Pat Walker**; Project of the Year, **Brenda Strong**; President's Award, **Wayne Elliott**; Golden Work Glove, **Jeff Brown**; Public Awareness, **Martin Davis**; No Problem, **Mimi Hershey**; Research & Development, **Charlie Colman**; Helping Hand, **Chris Steavenson**; Agent's Award, **Laurie Graham**; Friends of SCMG, **Klubber Lubrication and John Sykes**; Certificates of Appreciation **Delane Caesar-Sykes and Denise Rasco**.

Go to <https://txmg.org/smith/about/awards-recognition-3/> to view pictures of these folks. The excellent video of the presentation of the new MGs and the new Interns, plus those who received awards can be viewed on the Member's page.

Online Gardening courses link: <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/catalog?pagename=Plants-and-Garden>

Class 27 having fun, before "social distancing".

