

MG Grapevine

<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

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November 2020



**The next
SCMG Association meeting is
Thursday, December 3, 2020
At 11:30 AM via ZOOM**

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Martin Davis, Editor

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Go to Page 3 for info about
the meeting.



Debby's Digressions

Where has the year gone!
Christmas is right around
the corner. If you've been
good boys and girls this
year, then Santa Claus will
bring you the gardening
gifts you've been dreaming
about! But, with the popu-

larity that gardening has garnered during the
pandemic, we better hope that Santa Claus
has stockpiled all the gardening gifts that
we're wishing for. Either that or our families
shopped online early...keep your fingers
crossed...

Plans continue to be made to hold a 2021
Training Class. Greg is planning for it to be
an in-person class like in the past because of
the educational value in doing it that way,
but realizes options need to be considered.
The first class is scheduled for Thursday,
January 7, 2021. COVID 19 may change
that, but in some way, shape, or form there
will be a class at some point in 2021! The
Orientation was held on Thursday, Novem-
ber 19, 2020, with nine people attending.
The word is getting around about how much
fun we have since there were several Master
Gardener spouses in attendance. Either that,
or as Greg put it, "you must want to know
what your spouses are doing on Tuesdays
from 8-12!"

As you read this, we are almost at the end
of the year for you to obtain the state mini-
mum of 12 Volunteer hours and 6 Continu-
ing Education (CE) hours in 2020 to stay
certified as a Texas (Smith County) Master
Gardener. We want you all to continue to be
certified and maintain your affiliation with
the Smith County Master Gardeners Associ-
ation. (This information does not apply to
Interns.) Even during the midst of the pan-
demic there are ways to obtain hours and
still stay safe. The Friday e-blast is a great
source of suggestions for things to do for
both volunteer and continuing education
hours, along with the links on the home page
of VMS that are a source for continuing
education hours. **Most importantly, if you're
having problems or extenuating circum-
stances due to the pandemic, health, or**

**family matters, please reach out to me and
let me know.** Also, we know there are those
of you that have participated but have not
entered your hours in VMS. **Please, get
those hours entered! All hours must be en-
tered by December 31, 2020.** It is important
if you want to continue to be certified, but it
also is important for Greg and his status at
AgriLife and us having a horticultural agent.

The following is an email from Jayla Fry,
Texas Master Gardener Coordinator.

From an email dated November 13, 2020:

Certification/Recertification Hours

*Earlier this year, I differed to later in the year to
discuss MG service hours for recertification and en-
couraged everyone to continue to try to get their hours.
I have visited with agents and the TMGA Executive
Committee to gain insight in to this matter. Agents
tended to be neutral on the matter, wanting to honor
the service many have already done but also wanting to
be sensitive to the unusual circumstances. As certified
Texas Master Gardeners, the TMGA Executive
Committee was unanimous stating that hours should
not be waived.*

*The hours should not exceed the state minimum of
12 hours of service and 6 hours of education. The one
exception is of extenuating circumstances and agents
should decide that on a case by case basis, not a total
waive of all hours for the group. Therefore, to remain
a certified Texas Master Gardener, 12 service hours
should be given for the 2020 year.*

*Interns who were trained in 2019-2020 and are still
are working toward their 50 hours, may have a one
year extension. However, their recertification require-
ment (12 hours) will apply for their second year. (This
does not apply to our interns because their year goes to
March 31, 2021, not this December 31, 2020.)*

*If anyone is short on hours, this is a fabulous time
to research, write, photograph, and video all from
home. There are so many alternative ways to educate
without coming in contact with others and with our
service requirement being low this should not be a
tremendous burden. We hope our volunteers will enjoy
serving in alternative ways.*

Thank you, Jayla

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To Prune or not to Prune

To everything there is a season. And when it comes to pruning trees and shrubs, that season is often the dormant season (fall, winter, and early spring). Unfortunately, many folks that wield saws and pruners have no concept of why they are pruning so let's take a look at some things to consider

1. **Size.** Pruning for size is most often associated with shrubs and should almost never be practiced on trees. The most important thing to remember is to plant trees and shrubs based on their ultimate height and width, not what they look like when you purchase them. Do your homework and don't create a problem later.
2. **Shape.** This too is often associated with shrubs, particularly evergreen shrubs grown as hedges, topiary, and espalier. This can be done pretty much year round but is typically avoided in the fall when the tender new growth might be damaged by cold winter temperatures.
3. **Dead wood.** Dead branches can and should be removed any time during the year for aesthetic reasons as well as for the health of the plant in case they harbor insects or disease.
4. **Old wood vs. new wood.** THE most important thing to know when it comes to pruning blooming shrubs is whether they produce their flowers on the previous season's growth (azalea, camellia, forsythia, gardenia, hydrangea, loropetalum, quince, spirea, etc.) or on new growth (crapemyrtles and roses). Those that bloom on last season's growth should never be pruned in the fall or winter or there will be no flowers the next year.
5. **Thinning.** Some plants like forsythia, nandina, quince, and spirea are best thinned just after blooming by removing 1/3 of the oldest canes near the ground each year.
6. **Renewal.** Some plants that have become over-grown can be cut to around six inches leaving multiple trunks to re-sprout and re-grow. This can be done with most hollies, spirea, flowering quince, roses, and disfigured crapemyrtles.
7. **Limbing up.** Many overgrown shrubs like hollies, ligustrum, loropetalum, sasanqua, sweet olive, etc. can be limbed up into beautiful small trees by selecting the most attractive well-spaced trunks and removing the other smaller, insignificant ones. They should be allowed to grow naturally with little to no topping or shearing.
8. **Topping.** The practice of lopping off the tops of trees should NEVER take place on anything other than peaches in an orchard. Topping not only disfigures the trees but makes them much more prone to limb breakage in the future due to narrow crotch angles and a profusion of unnatural suckers and growth.
9. **Crapemyrtles.** Other than removing suckers from the base, dead wood, and crossing/rubbing branches, crapemyrtle require no pruning at all. Topping them disfigures their picturesque natural branching, makes them less cold hardy, promotes basal suckers, and makes them more prone to crapemyrtle bark scale. However, dwarfs and semi-dwarfs can but cut to the ground each spring to be grown as shrubs. Those horribly butchered and maimed can also be cut to the ground in early spring to start over and quickly establish new trunks.
10. **Never.** Many small trees like camellias, sasanquas, Japanese maples, and especially dogwoods should never be pruned other than removing dead wood, crossing/rubbing branches, or rootstock suckers from below the graft union. Like crapemyrtles, dogwoods and Japanese maples have beautiful natural branching habits and don't need our help. -Greg

Debby's Digressions (continued from page 1)

Our November membership meeting was a smashing success as a hybrid of Zoom and in-person! The setting at Mineola Nature Preserve was absolutely gorgeous, the weather was perfect and we managed to be able to Zoom from the middle of nowhere. It was so nice to see real faces in addition to the Zoom faces. We had wanted to try a hybrid meeting for December but that darned ole coronavirus just won't go away. So, the meeting will be a special presentation via Zoom. You're gonna want a tune in to see which garden wins bragging rights at the "smack-down" and, also, how much has to be matched in monetary donations! Not only will it be a feel-good moment, but you can get a continuing education hour for it.

The Board of Directors is working on the submission of the "Texas Master Gardener Association Search for Excellence Awards for 2020." Even in the midst of the pandemic, due to our innovation and adaptation, we are able to submit in five categories. More details will be forthcoming on what they are. The submissions are due by January 31, 2021. We are an "award-winning" association and want to continue to perform in that manner.

I wish the most blessed of the holiday season for you and yours and, as always, please continue to be safe during this unconventional time...especially during our celebrations of this special time of the year!

Debby Watkins, President

December Membership Meeting

Since we can't have our normal celebratory luncheon, we are going to turn things around! As announced at the November meeting, we are having a food drive,



and the beneficiaries are Meals on Wheels and PATH.



The Heritage Rose Garden volunteers have issued a challenge to the volunteers of the Shade Garden and the IDEA Garden. Let's see who wins bragging rights based on the weight of the donated food! We are planning the big weigh-in for our December 3rd meeting, with Tuesday, December 1st being the last day to bring your donations to one of the gardens. If you want to donate food but you cannot manage this deadline, please contact the garden coordinator to make alternate arrangements.

PATH can accept all of the shelf-stable food that we can deliver. They are focusing on meats, stews, soups and so on at this time of year, and they ask for smaller packaged goods - so not that huge 6 pound can of tomatoes or the 25 pound bag of rice!

Meals on Wheels cannot accept food donations, so we are also accepting monetary donations. Terri Gerber has added a DONATION item to the MG online store (<https://scmg-online.company.site>) for those who want to make a donation via

credit card. Those who want to donate via personal check can make it payable to **Meals on Wheels East Texas** and send it to the AgriLife office so that it arrives by 11:00 am on Tuesday, December 1. **SCMGA will match every contribution!** We've got to spend that luncheon money somewhere, after all. The deadline for all monetary donations is Tuesday, December 1. Any monies received after that date will be forwarded to Meals on Wheels, but will not be matched by SCMGA.

Due to the current COVID-19 spikes, member health and safety is our primary concern. The December meeting will be held via Zoom at 11:30 on Thursday, December 3. The AgriLife classroom will be the scene of the SmackDown Weigh-In, with a skeleton crew of representatives from the gardens bringing their donations. **Tiffany Damskov**, Marketing and Development Director for Meals on Wheels East Texas and **Mike Vasquez**, Emergency Services Manager of PATH, will be on hand to accept both our monetary and food donations. In addition, Mike will present a program to broaden our understanding of the reach of this non-profit, non-denominational, local ministry. He might also make a pitch for how we can help, by donating any excess bounty from our home gardens. One CE will be given for attendance.

So, we'll look for you on Zoom - the meeting link will be sent out via eBlast, as well as posted on our web site and on VMS.

Mary Jo Madden



The Board of Directors met via ZOOM on November 19, 2020. The following items were discussed:

Policy and Procedures/Job Description - The board agreed with changes made under the Finance Policy and Procedures in regard to Policy #3009, Memorials to SCMGA active members.

Other changes made were the Secretary Job Description and the Historian Job Description. All revisions will appear in the Policy/Procedures and Job Description Manual available on the SCMGA website and VMS.

VMS Update - Jean Smith updated the board on members with insufficient volunteer hours and continuing education hours. Board members agreed to reach out to members they know personally and Debby will follow up with an email to those members needing hours.

2020 Texas Master Gardener Association Awards - The board agreed to submit the following awards for our association:

- Project Award - Tyler Botanical Garden
- Educational Program Award- From Bulbs to Blooms Sale and Conference
- Written Education Award - Newspaper
- Association Award - SCMGA
- Individual Award - Debby Watkins

Sponsorship for Texas Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences State Conference - A sponsorship request was presented to the board for an upcoming conference to be held in Tyler next July 2021. The board agreed to revisit the request at a later meeting.

December Membership Meeting - There will not be a luncheon this year due to all the COVID concerns. In the best interest of our members, all donations will be collected at one of the gardens on workdays and monetary donations can be made through the SCMGA online store. To keep our members safe, there will be a ZOOM meeting from the classroom at the Extension Office of the weigh-in of donations received on or before December 1st. The board is continually trying to figure out ways to keep our members engaged and involved without being uncomfortable.

New Class 2021 - An orientation for new class members will be held this afternoon to determine the amount of interest and options for the upcoming year.

-- The next Board of Directors meeting with old and new board members will be Thursday, December 17th.

-Janie Fowler

In 2021, the **International Master Gardener Conference** will be held virtually. Though a virtual conference was not the original plan, we are excited for this unique opportunity to bring our speakers, workshops, and networking opportunities to **even more** Master Gardeners at a greatly-reduced cost from attending the in-person event. All sessions will be recorded and available for viewing later. It is hoped that the decision to move to a virtual platform will make the conference more accessible to Master Gardeners near and far.

- **When:** September 12-17, 2021
- **Where:** Our easy-to-use virtual conference platform
- **Who:** Members of the public, Master Gardeners, and Extension specialists

Schedule: Check the preliminary [schedule](#) and the [speakers](#) page

Cost: Greatly reduced from the cost of in-person attendance. More details released early 2021!

Registration: opens Monday, April 5, 2021



New Phone Numbers

Susan Wiggins – 906-595-6196

Janet Burns - 903-570-4687.

New e-mail addresses:

Jean Smith - txsmithjean17@gmail.com



Help Desk

The Help Desk will be operating remotely the rest of this year. We anticipate being back in the AgriLife office in early 2021. Questions can be directed to the Help Desk at smithmghelpdesk@gmail.com

Thanks! *Susan Stone*

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

Smith County Master Gardener Association

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