



# SCMGA NEWS



## Somervell County Master Gardeners Association

[somervellmastergardeners.org](http://somervellmastergardeners.org)

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Volume 2, Issue 2

February 2009

## February Community Horticultural Education Program

Monday, February 9, 6:30 pm, Somervell County Citizens Center



### Vegetable Gardening with Jack Rowland

Jack Rowland, the Johnson County Master Gardener and vegetable guru, will be back with more tips and tricks on how to have a productive spring vegetable garden. His ability to share his in depth knowledge of vegetable gardening along with humorous stories makes this a very enjoyable session. Come learn about the best veggie varieties for our area, when to

plant, how to plant, watering tips, and much more! For additional information visit our website at [www.somervellmastergardeners.org](http://www.somervellmastergardeners.org)

### SCMGA Officers 2008- 2010

President:  
Donna Hagar

Vice President:  
Sandi Stringer

Secretary:  
Marilyn Cranford

Treasurer:  
Barbara Lancaster

Historian:  
Yvonna Brown

**Special Committees**  
EK Rose Gardens:  
Bob Lancaster

Education Chairman  
Greg Marsh

Webmaster:  
Dove Johnson

Newsletter Editor:  
Donna Hagar

## SCMGA COMMUNITY HORTICULTURAL EDUCATION SERIES TOPICS FOR 2009

All programs will be held at the Somervell County Citizens Center, at 6:30 pm, second Monday of the month. Please visit our website for any changes.

[www.somervellmastergardeners.org](http://www.somervellmastergardeners.org)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
February 9	Vegetable	Jack Rowland
March 9	Rainwater Harvesting	Greg Marsh
April 13	Container Gardening	Wanda Riley
May 11	Roses	Garey Wylie
June 8	Turf Grass	Josh/Mcafee
July	no program	
August 10	Butterfly Gardening	Polly Parmer
September 14	Fire Ants	Josh Blanek
October 12	Yard Art	TBD
November 9	Trees for Somervell County	Carrie Smith
December	no program	

## New Certified Somervell County Master Gardeners

Somervell County Master Gardeners officially grew by four members on Thursday, January 22, 2009 at the annual Somervell County Leadership Advisory Board Annual Dinner at Glen Lakes Camp in Glen Rose.

Donna Hagar, President of SCMGA, presented 5 certificates to individuals who completed the 50 hours of extensive horticultural training and 50 hours of additional volunteer community service in 2008. They are a welcome addition to our growing organization.

*Submitted by Sandi Stringer*



Pictured receiving certification were Carolyn Norman, Marilyn Cranford, Donna Hagar, SCMGA President, Joan Orr accepting posthumously for Clara Merrill and JoAnn Davidson. Not pictured Becky Altobelli.

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## 2009 Master Gardener Training Classes

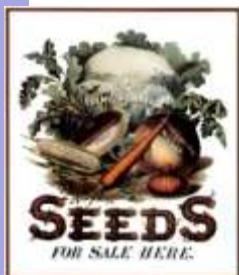
The next Tri-County Master Gardener Training Classes will be held in the spring of 2009, beginning March 26th. The classes are once per week, mostly Thursdays, a few Tuesdays, with the classes concluding May 28. Class times are 9 am – 12 noon, lunch break on your own and 1pm -5 pm. Class locations will rotate between Somervell, Hood and Johnson Counties. The cost is currently set at \$110, to cover cost of books, speaker fees, etc. Registration forms are now available at the Somervell County Extension Office. The forms and fees are due no later than Feb. 20th. For more information, call Josh Blaneck, CEA, 254-897-2809, email [somervellmq@gmail.com](mailto:somervellmq@gmail.com), or visit our website at [www.somervellmastergardeners.org](http://www.somervellmastergardeners.org).

The schedule of classes for this year is listed on the [last page](#) of this newsletter.

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## February Gardening Tips

By Shirley D Smith  
Somervell County Master Gardener



I am sure many of you (as I am!) are “chomping at the bit” to get to work in your gardens on these pretty spring-like days we have been blessed with. Well, here are a few tips to help you out when things start sprouting or have already sprouted:

### **Seeds Tip**

The smaller seeds plant shallow.  
The bigger seeds plant deeper.  
If you forget this simple rule,  
Your seeds will all be sleepers!

### **Wood Ashes**

If you have a wood-burning fireplace, save some of your ashes in a covered container. In early spring, mix 4 dry gallons of ash with ½ cup Epsom salts and sprinkle ½ pound of the dry mixture per 100 square feet of soil around your awakening bulbs. Do this only once a year, however! Wood ash contains calcium (35%), phosphorous and potassium. Epsom salts are high in sulfur (13%) and magnesium (10%), which are rapidly utilized by plants.

### **Fishy Fertilizer**

Use fish emulsion and kelp – liquid or powder – (bought at most places that sell plants) as natural organic fertilizers to promote healthy soil and plants.

### **Grasshopper Be Gone!**

Sprinkle flour (white – not the self-rising type) for sprinkling on plants plagued by grasshoppers.



### **Bubble, Bubble, Toil (but no) Trouble**

When tomatoes, eggplants and peppers begin to bloom, mix up this potent potion to encourage prolific, healthy fruiting. Pour this onto the soil surrounding your plants: 2 Tablespoons Epsom salts in 1 gallon of water. The magnesium and sulfur in the Epsom salts are macronutrients that foster fruiting.



### **Chomp, Chomp, Whir**

Still have leaves lying around your place? Then rake them up and run them through a shredder or run your lawnmower over them. Or, you can dump them in a trash can and use your weed whacker to shred them. Now you can top your beds with these shredded leaves and don't worry, they won't change the pH of the soil.

## ***Know Your Soil***

*by Yvonna Brown Somervell County Master Gardener*

The Holidays are over, the decorations are stored away, and all the company is gone. What will we do with all of our spare time?

Now is the perfect time to start preparing the soil for those new flower beds and gardens you have been thinking about all winter. By taking a few extra steps now your plantings will be healthier, more productive, more attractive, and require less maintenance.

The first step is to know your soil. Three basic soil characteristics are of primary importance:

1. Soil texture, which is determined by the relative amounts of coarse –textured sand to fine-textured silt or even finer –textured soil. Unfortunately, most natural soils in Texas are predominated by sand or clay. Soil texture will determine which plants are best suited to your flower beds and gardens.
2. Soil pH is the measurement of the soils acidity and alkalinity with 7 being neutral. Less than 7 is Acidic and higher than 7 is alkaline. The soil pH is important as it determines the level of nutrients available to the plants. It is difficult to change the pH of soil so it is best to select plants that will thrive and survive in the pH of your soil. Soil test packets are available at the AgriLIFE Extension Office.
3. Percent of organic matter. Organic matter can be pine bark mulch, composted manure, composted cotton bur hulls, home compost, fallen leaves or any other combination. Microorganisms break down organic matter into humus, then to humic acid, and finally to nutrients which are then available to plants as the microorganisms die. The dead microorganisms, dead plant matter, and the addition of new organic matter keeps a food supply for the millions of existing microorganisms in the soil so the process repeats over and over. You can't have too much organic matter.

Once you know your soil, you are ready to go to work. Till or spade six inches of organic matter into the top eight or ten inches of your soil. This will create a good root zone for the plants. The top three or four inches of the prepared soil will provide better drainage if they are higher than the existing grade. If your soil is sitting on bedrock, as most of us are in our county, you may need to bring in topsoil to add to the organic matter to create the eight to ten inches of soil needed. If this is necessary, know your supplier or get references so a load of topsoil filled with weeds is not dumped on you.

Now just sit back, relax, and let it cook. When you are ready to select your plants we recommend the use of native and adaptive plants. The Somervell County Master Gardeners have a large selection of reference books on this subject in our library located at the AgriLIFE Extension Office.

Reference guides for this article are listed on our website at [www.somervellmastergardeners.org](http://www.somervellmastergardeners.org).

## Highlight on a Master Gardener

*Jim Cheatham*

### LIFE AS A SOMETIMES GARDENER

"And add to these retired leisure,  
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure\*."

-John Milton

I grew up on a 120 acre multi-purpose farm in Northwest Tennessee, not far from the Mississippi River and within about 300 yards of one of its tributaries, the Obion River. The Mississippi River, in those days as is true today, had the characteristic of rising above its flood stage more often than I care to remember, causing the rivers flowing into it to back up and, in turn, to occasion a lot of destruction. My father had inherited the farm from his grandfather in full knowledge of the risks of trying to farm a flood-prone area. The counterpoint was the great productivity of the soil periodically enriched by the overflows. In good years—those when there was not an excessive amount of rain in the Mississippi Valley—one prospered; in the bad years, one got by as best one could.

In addition to the cash crops—milk cows, hogs, corn and soybeans—a large garden consisting of the staples on about an acre supplied most of the nutritional demands of a large family. Perforce, a large part of my time was spent in the raising of vegetables for the kitchen table. Since just about anything would grow and flourish in the deep black soil of our garden, there was no occasion to worry about pH levels or appropriate fertilization; one stuck the seed or plant in the dirt and it grew, provided it didn't get washed away in a Spring flood. Gardening in those days, at least in West Tennessee, hardly involved the use of any power-driven machinery. It demanded a lot of back-breaking labor, mostly involving the hoe, the shovel and the rake. My most poignant memories are of chopping corn on hot, humid summer days when the stalks were about head high and not a breath of cool air was to be had. I could scarcely wait for my high school graduation knowing that then I would escape from a drudgery that never seemed to lead to anything better.

I was never to lose contact with the natural world even as I was to spend all my income-producing years in the city. Having swum in the nearby river, fished in the slough even closer to our home and wandered in the river bottom that reached almost to our doorstep, I had formed a great attachment for the outdoors. In the several foreign locales I have lived as well as in Washington, I always found opportunities to commune with nature—biking and jogging almost everywhere (even running competitively in the Arabian desert), snorkeling among the corals in the Red Sea, sailing in Montevideo, downhill

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skiing in the Andes and the Alps, cross-country skiing in the Eifelgebirge and along the Rhine, and hiking everywhere. I've had the chance to do a lot of things in my 73 years, some of which I have regretted, but I won't mention them here. In two of the places I lived—Suriname and Chile—I engaged in vegetable gardening albeit with the aid of paid help.

Upon my retirement to Texas, I couldn't forego the challenge of applying my hands to the land, such as it is on this ranch. Rocky, shallow and alkaline soils and brutal summer weather were outside the scope of my experience and my efforts at raising vegetables, herbs and flowers met with only indifferent returns. When I read about the Master Gardening course in early 2001, I saw an opportunity to hone my very dull skills. The results have been commensurate to the effort though I still blush a bit when I tell someone I am a Master Gardener. As one concerned about environmental degradation, I try to economize on the use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides—fairly successfully I think—and to make maximum use of compost, mulch and the natural fertilizer that comes out of my chicken house.

As one on to a good thing, I can't resist proselytizing on behalf of the psychic edification and the enhancement of physical well-being that come with getting one's hands in the soil. Then too, there is the pleasure of knowing that community service of this type means that I am not just a deadweight on society in my retirement years. We are heirs to the social capital accumulated over many generations; it's our duty, in my view, to maintain it and even enhance it to the extent we can. Let's all keep gardening and trumpeting its pleasures so long as we can.

\*With the Queen's English, "leisure" rhymes with "pleasure".



*A reproduction of Jean-Francois Millet's "Man with a Hoe" was one of the pictures in a traveling art exhibit sponsored by the TN educational association that I saw as a 14 year old at the Martin TN school. Presumably the powers that be in TN education thought we clodhoppers needed to be exposed to some "high art" to qualify as "educated" to TN standards.*

## 2009 Master Gardener Class Schedule

Date	A.M. Topic	A.M. Speaker	P.M. Topic	P.M. Speaker	Location
March 26, 2009	Orientation/ Pre Test		Pesticides	Don Renchie	Glen Rose
April 2, 2009	Texas Master Gardeners	Jayla Fry	Soils	Mike Gage	Cleburne
April 7, 2009	Rainwater Harvesting	Billy Kniffen	Earthkind Roses	Steve George	Granbury
April 16, 2009	Herbs	Steve Chaney	Organic Gardening	Steve Chaney	Cleburne
April 23, 2009	Vegetables	Bob Whitney	Fruits, Nuts, Grapes	Whitney/Whit Wheems/Fran Pontash	Glen Rose
April 28, 2009	Turf Grass	Jim McAfee	Trees	Carrie Smith	Granbury
May 7, 2008	TBA	TBA	Entomology	Mike Merchant	Cleburne
May 14, 2009	Botanical Garden Tour	Steve Chaney	Landscape Design	Steve Chaney	Ft.Worth
May 19, 2009	Plant Propagation	Polly Parmer	TBA	TBA	Granbury
May 28, 2009	M.G. Presentations	Panel of Speakers	Final Test		Glen Rose

To sign up for the New 2009 Tri County Master Gardener Classes, please contact Josh Blaneck, CEA Somervell County, 254-897-2809



### Somervell County Master Gardeners Association

Visit Our Website

<http://www.somervellmastergardeners.org>

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The Somervell County Master Gardeners are volunteers who work with the AgriLIFE Extension to improve gardening skills throughout the community. Program objectives are implemented through the training of local volunteers known as Master Gardeners. We collaborate with Extension to conduct youth and community education; establish and maintain demonstration gardens; and provide a speakers bureau. We work with special audiences in the community for youth and community outreach of a horticultural nature. We recruit and educate new Master Gardener candidates for effective volunteering.

The training for Somervell County is held in combination with Hood and Johnson Counties and is currently held only every other odd year. The next training for our area will be held in the spring of 2009. If you are interested in the SCMGA, we would like to invite and encourage you to visit one of our monthly meetings, so that you might learn more about our various projects and activities. Our regular monthly business meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. in the Somervell County Extension Office. For more information, please contact Josh Blaneck, Somervell County Extension agent at 254-897-2809 or [j-blaneck@tamu.edu](mailto:j-blaneck@tamu.edu) or you may email the SCMGA at [somervellmg@gmail.com](mailto:somervellmg@gmail.com).