



**SOMERVELL
COUNTY
MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**

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SCMGA Newsletter

THE GREEN PIECE



Volume 4, Issue 2

February 2011

“Vegetables Galore!”

SCMGA Community Horticulture Education Program

Monday, February 14, 2011, 6:30 PM

Somervell County Citizen Center, 209 SW Barnard

The Somervell County Master Gardeners will present their monthly Community Horticulture Education Session this coming Monday, February 14 on vegetable gardening. Our presenter will be Mary Lynn Martin of Granbury, a 15-year Master Gardener who is a certified Vegetable Specialist. Knowing that this cold and icy weather will not last, it is time to begin (if you have not already) planning your spring garden. She will be speaking about the more common vegetables found in our North Texas/Hill County gardens. Af-

ter her presentation, Mary Lynn will be available to answer any and all questions you might have concerning vegetable gardening. So, come on down at 6:30 p.m. to the Citizens Center, 209 SW Barnard, Glen Rose for this most informative and timely subject. We will have refreshments, too! See you there!



New Master Gardener Training Scheduled for Spring 2011

Plans for the next training class for Master Gardeners is well underway. The new class is scheduled to begin March 24, 2011 and will continue, once per week, either on a Tuesday or Thursday, until May 26th, 2011. (No classes during the last 2 weeks of April due to TMGA Conference). Classes will rotate between Granbury, Cleburne, and Glen Rose and will be taught by Texas A&M educators. Trainees will receive a large handbook/manual that contains extensive horticultural information.

If you are interested in participating in the Master Gardener program, contact the Somervell County Extension office, 254-897-2809 to obtain an application or download from our website, www.somervellmastergardeners.org. In the meantime, we invite you to attend our monthly meetings held the 3rd Wednesday each month at 10:00am at the Somervell County Extension Office. Our next meeting is Wednesday, February 16, 2011!

Wade's WallyWorm Word - "HERMAPHRODITIC"

Submitted by Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener



Wade: "WallyWorm, I heard some scuttlebutt that you became hermaphroditic. Is there anything I can do for you? Get you some pills or something?"
WallyWorm: "Better do some research, Wade. I became hermaphroditic a few months after I

hatched. Hermaphroditic is just a fancy word, derived from Hermes and Aphrodite, meaning that I possess both male and female reproduction organs. And, before you ask, I cannot reproduce by my lonesome."

"If you will pick me up, get your loupe, keep me in the shade so I won't be attacked by a sun spot, and pay attention. I will try to give you the low-down so you won't be led astray by scuttlebutt."

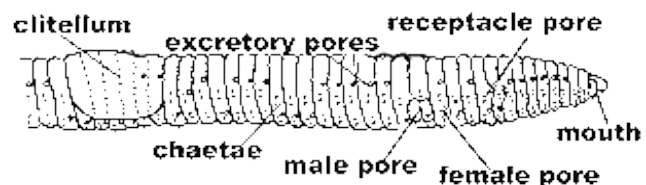
WallyWorm continues: "The reproduction process for us earthworms is pretty complex, so again, pay attention. Now, look closely and count my segments back from my front to segments 10 and 11. This is where my male sex cells are located. My sperm travels from here

back to segment 15 where the sperm is eventually dispersed through two tiny openings on my underside. Now, go back to segment 9 and 10 and you will find two tiny sacs where I will store my partner's sperm after mating"



"Now, hop back down to segment 13. Are you ready for this? This is where my egg-producing ovaries are. I produce eggs here and store them in egg sacs in segment 14. Oh, by the way, that rubbery arm band thingy covering

segments 31 to 37 is my clitella. When I discover another worm in a receptive mood we meet nose to nose and continue next to each other until our clitorides lay next to each others' segments 9 to 11. We then both excrete mucus until we are enclosed in a slime tube from segments 9 to 37. We now exchange sperm which is stored in segments 9 and 10."



"After this sperm deposit, we both go our separate ways. Later my clitella secretes a second mucus ring that slides forward along and around my body. When that ring passes over segment 14, several of my ripe eggs leave my egg sac and stick to the ring. As the ring passes over segments 9 and 10, sperm from my mating partner come in contact with my eggs and fertilization takes place. The ring continues to the front and I slip out of it. The openings of the ring self-seal creating a cocoon, which is let lay in the soil. Later the eggs hatch and my tiny offspring escape the cocoon and begin their life's journey."

Wade: "Well, if you are finished, I'll put you back down to earth. And by the way, if I come across that rumormonger again, I am sending him down here to hear your story and then I bet he will mind his tongue."



Data gathered from: www.backyardnature.net/earthworm.htm

The Good, The Bad and the Bugly

by Shirley Smith, Somervell County Master Gardeners

Last month's Community Horticulture Education Session presented by the Somervell County Master Gardeners was creepy. But, before you stop reading, let me just say that this program was also very eye-opening.

Curt Decker, Natural Resources Director at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center spoke to the group about bugs and, as the title of the article implies, there are those that are very beneficial. Curt stated that only approximately 5% of all insects are truly pests. The other 95% are either beneficial or neutral. How about that! And all along you thought that if it crawled - step on it! We learned that insects fall into three groups: predators, pollinators and recyclers.

DID YOU KNOW. . .

- that those dirt daubers that build their impenetrable mud houses almost anywhere are actually to be courted. The Blue Mud Wasp or Blue Mud Dauber build their house around a black widow spider.



- one species of Mantis – the one we call Praying Mantis (*Mantis religiosa*) - was introduced from Europe. The native mantis is more green and brown. You really want to encourage these guys.
- Daddy Long Leg Spiders are not a true spider at all. They have very little, if any, venom and no fangs at all! So, the old myth is debunked.
- Centipedes will eat almost anything smaller than themselves.

Before this turns into a tome of enormous proportions, just let me say that the program (again!) was extremely interesting and helpful. So, don't swat, step on or squish the next bug/insect you see before thinking about whether or not it is going to do something good for you and your garden.

Here are some websites that might assist you in determining just what it was that ran across your foot:

<http://www.dallasbutterflies.com>

<http://www.whatsthatbug.com>

<http://www.insectidentification.org>

Community Horticulture Education Series for 2011

Our CHES programs will continue as always in 2011 on the 2nd Monday night of the month at 6:30 pm at the Citizens Center. We are still finalizing specific dates and speakers, but some of the topics planned for 2011 include:

- * Water features * Vegetable Gardening - Spring and Fall * Gourds
- * Hummingbirds * Urban Chickens * Hands-on Rain Water Harvesting
- * Composting * Pruning trees & shrubs and Native grasses.

Please check our website somervellmastergardeners.org for updates as we plan our programs for 2011!

If you have a request for a specific area of interest, please let us know!

Favorite Plants Of Master Gardeners

CANNAS (Canna Lillies)

By Joan Orr, Somervell County Master Gardener



Common name/ Scientific name: Canna / *Canna x generalis*

Native/ Adapted: Not a native plant but adapted to this area

Height: One and a half to eight feet

Spread: Will multiply and spread during growing season

Light: Full sun but will tolerate partial shade

Evergreen/ Deciduous: Perennial plant reproduced by seed or rhizomes

Seasonal Interest: Large flowers on bold up-turned leaves start blooming in early summer/a great focal point in any garden

Colors/ Features: Variegated and solid leaf varieties with flowers in an array of colors including red/orange/ salmon/ pink / yellow

Water: Loves water/ will tolerate soggy soil

Maintenance: Some pruning required/mulch during the winter

Wildlife: Hummingbirds and bees favor this plant

Deer: Deer seem to have no interest in cannas



Comments/ Experience: My grandmother always liked growing cannas or, as she and some of the old-timers called them, Canna Lillies. They were and still are a favorite of gardeners because they adjust

well to our Texas heat and can tolerate some cold. I have several cannas in my garden, one of which is a dwarf variety.

Cannas are a hardy plant and tolerate most activities of children and animals. I have not had any problems with deer eating my cannas. There is one pest known as the canna leaf-roller that sometimes will come to cannas. Just pick them off as you see them or be prepared to spray. Occasionally in drought, grasshoppers can be a problem. In Latin, the word canna means "reed" and indeed cannas do have a reed-like stalk.

Even though we speak of this plant as a Lilly, it is not in the lilly family. It is just a dependable easy-to-grow perennial plant. For best results, plant after the last frost 3-4 inches deep in rich moist soil. When mature plants flower, cut the spent blooms to produce new growth. Often, there are new shoots just below the spent blossoms, so take care not to cut those. Cannas will not fail you. Just sit back and enjoy their blossoms and beauty.

Source: Southern Living Annuals and Perennials





Joan Orr

AROUND THE FEEDER

HUMMINGBIRDS

*Submitted By Joan Orr and
Nancy Hillin, Somervell County Master Gardeners*



Nancy Hillin

Even though there are 18 species of Hummingbirds that make Texas their home, not all will be seen by every neighborhood.

The most common for us are the Ruby-throated, the Black-chinned, Buff-bellied, Blue-throated, Magnificent and Rufous Hummingbirds. As guardians of nature, we can provide plants that hummingbirds prefer in addition to nectar feeders. It is necessary for their survival that these little wonders consume one-half of their body weight in sugar every day.

Flowers should have some of these characteristics to attract hummers: bright colors, usually red and purple hues / trumpet shapes with long necks/ heavy nectar producers. Hummers that have adapted their bills for longer flowers prefer plants such as Cross vines, Lilies and Red Yucca. When necessary, they will feed from plants where their shorter-billed relatives find nectar. The following is a short list of some of the plant preferences of all Hummingbirds.

Autumn Sage-Bleeding Heart-Cardinal Flower-Carolina Jessamine-Columbine-Coral Honey-suckle-Bee Balm-Clematis-Desert Willow- Fire Bush-Foxglove-Gayfeather-Hamelia-Hibiscus-Lantana-Petunia-Mexican Buckeye-Nasturtium-Obedient Plant-Pentstemon-Phlox-Pussy Willow-Salvias-

Shrimp Plant-Turk's Cap-Texas Sage



Albedo Hummingbird

The smallest nesting bird of the United States is the Calliope, commonly called "Little Star". Males are larger than the female, but weigh only around 2.5 grams. They make their home in the far western United States. The smallest hummingbird in the world is the Bee Hummingbird that is found in Cuba. As the name implies, it is the size of a bee. Again, the male is the larger of the sexes, but weighs only 1.95 grams. In comparison, one of the Hummingbirds we see here most often is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird that weighs about 3.5 grams. On the other end of the scale is the largest Hummingbird that resides in the Andes with a hefty weight of 18-20 grams. Then there is the ghostly-white Ruby-throated Hummingbird. It is distinguished from a true Al-

bino Hummingbird if it lacks pink eyes and feet and retains a diluted color.

Hummers are the only bird with the ability to fly forward, straight up and down, right and left and backwards. Their wing rotation is 180 degrees with a wing beat of 80 per second. Hummingbirds have the highest metabolism of all animals. When active, their heart rate is an amazing 1,260 beats per minute. At night it slows to 50-180 beats per minute. To conserve energy, hummers will go into a state known as "torpor". They will use up to 50 times less energy and lower their metabolic rate by 95%. When in "torpor" for long periods of time during the winter, it is known as hibernation.

For the Hummers that frequent our area, it is best to have more than one nectar feeder, as these birds are extremely territorial, especially the males. Larger birds tend to run the smaller ones away from a feeder. Use the water to sugar ratio of four to one when making nectar for a feeder. If you boil the sugar with the water, the sugar concentration will be higher and that feeder will be the first one the birds will visit. For the next feeder add the

See Hummers(Continued on page 6)

Hummingbirds, continued

(Continued from page 5)

sugar after the water boils and the smaller birds will be able to get to it without confrontation. Nectar will remain fresh for two to four days depending on the weather. It is not necessary to use food coloring in this recipe and never use honey or a sugar



substitute. When changing the solution, wash with dish soap and rinse thoroughly. If mold appears, soak the feeder in a diluted bleach solution and rinse thoroughly. Pay special attention to the ports on the feeders that they remain unclogged. Crevices and ports are easily cleaned by using one tablespoon of dry rice or popcorn kernels to half a feeder of water. Shake the feeder and rinse thoroughly. Play sand will do a good job, also. Try soaking feeders in denture cleanser and water for a sparkling shine. Just always rinse thoroughly. If you should have trouble with ants or other creatures invading the feeder, try putting Vaseline on the top of the feeder or on the object from which it hangs. You can purchase an "ant moat" to attach above the feeder,

which will help stop invaders. An appropriate time to stop feeding is two weeks after you no longer see any birds at the feeders. Hummers will not eat seed, but will feed on tiny arthropods such as insects and spiders to get needed protein. With their lower beak flexing downward, they create a perfect trap for capturing mosquitoes. So, they are great for insect control, besides serving as wonderful pollinators.

Nesting duties are left strictly to the female. She constructs a nest from the down of plants, the silk from spider webs and covers it with lichen (a mix of algae and fungus). We must consider her an architectural engineer as this design is the most perfect nest for her young. The spider silk binds the nest with an elasticity that allows the nest to expand as the hatchlings grow, the plant down makes the nest soft and the lichen keeps the rain and wind at bay. This perfect work of nature is about the size of half a walnut shell. A clutch of 2 eggs are laid that are smaller than Lincoln's chest on a penny, or compare to the size of a small navy bean or half the size of a jelly bean. Incubation period is 15 to 18 days and nesting time is 18 to 21 days. Each female usually sits two nests per season. She feeds the nestlings a diet like her own of tiny insects, spiders and nectar. Soon after the little

ones become fledglings, mother bird considers them to be her competitors and forces them from the nest and her feeding territory. True enemies of the Hummingbird include owls, hawks, cats, lizards, snakes, spiders, and sometimes even praying mantis.

Banding studies show that hummers tend to return every year to the same place they hatched, and will even visit the same feeders. If you should find a nest, it is best to leave it for a returning bird to use in rebuilding a new nest. They travel more than 1,000 miles from Central America and Mexico to get to Texas. If Hummingbirds survive the critical first year, they can live 3-8 years in the wild. Texas Parks and Wildlife sponsors a citizen's survey called the Texas Hummingbird Round-up that encourages citizens to record sightings and participate in banding efforts. You may join by sending a small donation and your pertinent information to:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department-4200 Smith School Road-Austin, TX 78744

Sources: The Best of Birds and Blooms 2009 & 2010

Hummingbirds of North America – Texas A&M University Press

Peterson's Field Guide – Hummingbirds of North America



Lacewings
by Curt Decker,
Natural Resources Specialist, Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
& Shirley Smith,
Somervell County Master Gardener



There is an extremely interesting insect that I know you have seen numerous times but probably, like most of us, had no idea what it was.

Well, we are going to look at one of these insects in this article: the **Green Lacewing**. This is a beneficial insect in that its preferred foods are (just to name a few): aphids, mealybugs, spider mites, leafhopper nymphs, moth eggs, scales, thrips and whiteflies. Wow! How is that for a list of “bad” bugs that this little insect dines upon?

Some interesting tidbits: Studies have shown that adult green lacewings are attracted to host plant odors and tryptophan. Tryptophan is in most protein-based foods or dietary proteins. It's



in chocolate, oats, dried dates, milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, red meat, eggs, fish, poultry, sesame, chickpeas,

sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, spirulina, and peanuts. Despite popular belief that turkey has a particularly high amount of tryptophan, the amount of tryptophan in turkey is typical of most poultry. What's rather cool about tryptophan attracting lacewings is that it is a product of the breakdown of aphid honeydew.

There is also evidence that certain plant species stressed by heavy lacewing infestations release chemical scent “beacons” that draw lacewings to them.

Caryophyllene seems to be one attractant for lacewings. Below is a list of plants you could use that contain this chemical, either by planting an herb garden or using them from the spice rack.

Black Caraway (*Carum nigrum*)

Cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*)

Hops (*Humulus lupulus*)

Basil (*Ocimum spp.*)

Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)

Black pepper (*Piper nigrum*)

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

True cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*)

Malabathrum (*Cinnamomum tamala*)

Because young larvae are susceptible to desiccation, they may need a source of moisture.

Adult lacewings need nectar or honeydew as food before egg laying and they also feed on pollen. Therefore, plantings should include flowering plants and a low level of aphids should be tolerated. Artificial foods and honeydew substitutes are available commercially and have been used to enhance the number and activity of adult lacewings. These products may provide sufficient nutrients to promote egg laying, but they don't counter the dispersal behavior of newly emerged adult lacewings.

If you want to attract Lacewings (and even ladybird beetles to a degree), then by a little creative mixing of dairy, yeast, and sucrose (sugars) you can create lacewing feeders that will boost the density of the adults by drawing them into your garden.

Then, if you have some of the plants they prefer to lay their eggs on, you will have a batch of hungry little beasts ready, willing and able to keep your plants clean of aphids and other “pests,” and you can do this every year for little to no money.



Larva with host corpses attached to its back.



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We're on the web!

<http://www.somervellmastergardeners.org>

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 2011. 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 Blanek, Somervell County Extension agent at 254-897-2809 or [j_blanek@tamu.edu](mailto:blanek@tamu.edu) or you may email the SCMGA at somervellmg@gmail.com.



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