



**SOMERVELL
COUNTY
MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**

**SCMGA
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SCMGA Newsletter

THE GREEN PIECE



Volume 3, Issue 11

January 2010

Rose Pruning and Care

SCMGA Community Horticulture Education Program

Monday, January 11, 2010, 6:30 PM

Somervell County Citizen Center, 209 SW Barnard

*"This urge, wrestle, resurrection of dry sticks,
Cut stems struggling to put down feet,
What saint strained so much,
Rose on such lopped limbs to a new life?"
Cuttings (Later)
Theodore Roethke
(1908 -1963)*

The Somervell County Master Gardeners are excited to begin another year of our free Community Horticultural Education Programs. All of these programs are held

at the Somervell County Citizens Center, the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. To begin 2010, we have Bonnah Boyd and Bob Lancaster, both former presidents and current members of the SCMGA, presenting a program on



roses. This will be a hands on program showing the proper techniques for pruning roses as



well as other tips in growing roses. We hope to see you there. For additional information, call 8972809 or visit our website at

www.somervellmastergardeners.org

Somervell County Master Gardeners

Set 2010 Community Horticulture Education Programs

The Somervell County Master Gardeners have some exciting and informative programs set for 2010. All monthly programs will be held on the second Monday each month at 6:30 pm at the Somervell County Citizens Center, 209 SW Barnard. Please check our website www.somervellmastergardeners.org for updates.

January—Roses
February—Vegetables
March—Gourds/Bird House
April—Rainwater Harvesting
May—Bees
June—Worm Composting

July—no program
August—Compost Tea
September—Herbs
October—Greenhouse
November—Blue Bird Houses
December—no program

January Gardening Tips

By Sandi Stringer, Somervell County Master Gardener

Soil and Mulch:

Now is the perfect time to build the health back into your soil since you probably had flowers growing in your beds almost year round. In the process, you've likely depleted much of the organic matter in your soil and that is the lifeblood of your garden. How much organic matter do you need? It depends on your soil type and how intensively you garden. Compost and other organic matter can vary depending on composition etc but as a rule of thumb most of us should add 2-4 inches of compost or well-rotted manure annually. A simple formula for determining how much you need is: 5-10 five gallon buckets spread over 100 square feet of garden space equals about 1 inch of organic matter. Composted or aged manure, fallen leaves, pine straw, and wood chips from tree trimmings can be incorporated into the soil now in preparation for

spring planting. You can also purchase amendments such as cotton burr & mushroom compost. Test your soil for pH and nutrients through a soil analysis (contact your county extension office)

Hardwood mulches are considered better, but you can also use pine bark and cypress.

Garden Design:

Read the garden magazines for creative ideas for new beds. Think about creating butterfly and herb gardens

Flowers:

It's not too late to plant bulbs such as crocus, daffodil, narcissus, Dutch iris, hyacinth, and tulip. Purchasing them in the fall and then chilling them until planting, is recommended. Plant bluebonnet transplants into flowerbeds



Water:

Water at least once in January in the absence of significant rain

Plant Care:

Don't prune freeze damaged plant material yet, it actually offers some insulation for healthy plant tissue but do remove plant debris such as dead leaves, flowers, and twigs from beds. It is best to prune in Feb. or March.

Vegetables:

You can transplant cool-season vegetables and cold tolerant herbs at the end of the month. The following are examples of cool season vegetables: asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, onions, and leaf lettuces.

Visit our website at www.somervellmastergardens.org where you can get your gardening questions answered or visit our library at the Somervell County Extension Office

Sources: Texas Gardener Magazine and Doug Welsh's Texas Garden Almanac

Rainwater Harvesting Program at Brazos River Carter School

Submitted by Virginia Reynolds

In conjunction with their History Alive school wide project, a group of Brazos River Carter School students and their science teacher J. Corder studied water conservation. Julie Conner, Somervell County Master Gardener Rainwater Harvesting Specialist, visited Brazos River Carter School to provide a water conservation program and to assist the students in making Rain Barrels. Virginia Reynolds, also a Somervell County Master Gardener, helped the students in their rain barrel production. Two different styles of rain barrels were made. The students designed and painted the barrels and on November 17 at an evening presentation they shared their knowledge with their parents and guests. The students saw the fruits of their labor when the rain barrel filled up during the last rain shower.



Favorite Plant - “Mother of Thousands”

By Glenda Marsh, Somervell County Master Gardener

Common Name/Scientific Name: Mother of Thousands, Mexican Hat Plant/ *Kalanchoe daigremontiana* (1); also called Maternity Plant/*Bryophyllum daigremontianum* (formerly *Kalanchoe daigremontiana*) (2)

Native/Adapted: adapted I assume (no information is found); in the cactus/succulent category

Height:: 36 to 48 inches

Spread: nothing found; but our largest is about 10 inches across

Light: sun to partial shade

Evergreen/Deciduous: Evergreen

Seasonal Interest: will continue to grow if moved inside during winter; blooms are described but we have not seen any yet

Color/features: Pink, Magenta, Orange blooms are described; leaves are green or variegated

Water: average water needs; water regularly but do not overwater

Maintenance: very little

Wildlife: have seen no problems with any wildlife eating this plant!

Deer Resistant: yes

Comments/Experience with plant:

An appropriately named plant, our ‘Mother of 1000’ has been most prolific. Purchased about two years ago from Master Gardeners in Montgomery County, it was a ‘new plant someone brought in’ but no one seemed to know what it was.

Originally we put this small potted plant on our back porch. The ‘babies’ began to drop off the edge of the leaves and were apparently blown into the soil nearby. In no time we noticed many ‘babies’ springing up in the soil near the porch. We now have several pots of varying sizes of this interesting plant. Suitable for growing indoors, one is *cautioned* that all parts of the plant are poisonous.(2) If you have young kids this plant may not be a good choice as these ‘babies’ are always falling off and kids seem to find the smallest things on our floor to put in their mouth!!.

These plants are described as hardy to 25 degrees (2) & our plants have done well in morning sun areas & weathered through the winter in a greenhouse. Any good potting soil should ensure good plant growth of the mother plant and babies. Some consider this plant “invasive and a noxious weed” (1). TIP: BE CAREFUL where you plant it as you may have more babies than you ever wanted.



For more information about this plant & many others, visit

<http://www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org/forums> (2)

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/go/594/> (1)

Be sure and attend the next Somervell Master Gardener Community Education program.....you might just win one of these little plants as a door prize!



Establishing Home Fruit Trees

Submitted by Josh Blanek, CEA-AG/NR Somervell County

Imagine walking out into your yard and picking fresh fruit from your own tree. There is something exciting and rewarding about growing your own fruit, and I have received many calls this past week from people who are up for the challenge. And if you are also one of those people who are considering planting and growing fruit trees, now is the time to start. Fruit trees are



widely adapted in Texas. However, success in growing fruit trees and in producing quality fruit doesn't just happen. Careful attention must be given to basic management practices including site selection, variety selection, weed control, water and pest management. Good soil moisture drainage is essential for growing healthy, productive trees. Soils with standing water or ones that remain saturated for even a day or two following a heavy rain are unsuitable for fruit trees. If this describes your soil, you can still grow fruit by planting trees in well-drained, raised beds. Prepare beds by bringing in or scraping up topsoil into a 6 - to 12-inch-high mound at least 8 to 10 feet across. A raised bed can be framed with railroad ties or edging timbers for a

more attractive appearance. Plentiful sunlight is a key to maximizing fruit production. Choose an area that is sunny most or all of the day. Early morning sunshine is particularly important to dry dew from the plants; thereby, reducing the incidence of diseases. If the planting site does not get sufficient sun, expect reduced performance from the trees. Purchase trees from a reliable nursery source. Bargain plants may not be healthy or may not be a variety adapted to your area. Ideally, purchase 3- to 4-foot trees with good root systems free of apparent disease problems. A smaller tree with a good root system is more desirable than a larger tree with a poor root system. Specify that you want trees that are budded onto Nemaguard rootstock to prevent rootknot nematode damage. Most fruit trees are sold "bare root." Purchase and plant bare root trees while fully dormant, generally in January and February for our area of Texas. Plant in the winter, preferably before March 1, to allow for root development before spring growth. Before planting, soak the roots for no more than 1 hour to ensure they are not under any moisture stress. Dig the planting hole just large enough for the tree's root system to be spread in a

natural position. Avoid digging a hole deeper than the root system as loose soil beneath the roots usually causes trees to sink too deeply. Larger holes filled with topsoil are of no benefit unless the soil at the planting site is extremely poor (rocky, calcareous, etc.). In this case, use raised beds. Stone fruit trees will develop at least a 15-foot diameter limbspread at maturity. Plant them at least 20 feet apart to avoid excessive competition. Set plants at approximately the same depth that they grew in the nursery. Using the soil taken out of the hole, firm it around the roots and do not add fertilizer to the hole. Water the trees thoroughly soon after they are set; be sure that air pockets in the hole are filled and that the soil is at the proper level on the base of the tree after watering.



Water is essential for producing large fruit and maintaining healthy trees. Whether trees are watered by drip irrigation, sprinklers, the garden hose or rainfall makes

little difference as long as the trees receive sufficient water. Normally trees need water at least every 3 weeks. In summer heat, provide a deep soaking irrigation at least weekly to maintain healthy trees. Eliminating weed competition

See [Fruit Trees](#) (Continued on page 5)



"WALLY WORM WORD" - "DUNG"

by Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener

"Happy New Year WallyWorm; make your new years resolution yet?" "Well Wade, yes I have." OK WallyWorm, lay it on me." "Well I am going to try to meet and greet at least one of my neighbors every month this year."

Hark!! What lurks behind yon muck orb? Why it's Mr. and Mrs. Scarab; the dung beetle couple. Let's go visit with them.

"Hi WallyWorm, nice to see you out in the fresh air. You probably prefer to be in the fresh air when we are around. You see, we dine on, incubate our eggs in, and feed our young on "DUNG". The tunnels we dig to put dung balls like this in help the rangeland to take in a greater amount of rainwater. The Mrs. and I work together to roll this ball to the tunnel. We keep our noses to the ground and tumble our brood ball in reverse with our back legs. When we locate a good place, madam digs while I tote the diggings off, then we roll the brood ball in. Then the Mrs. lays one egg in the ball and seals the tunnel."

"Have a cigar WallyWorm, it has been a week and the Mrs. And I are the proud parents of a new dung beetle larva. The little cutie pie will dine on the brood ball for about 3 weeks and emerge from the tunnel as a young beetle with its nose in the air searching for fresh muck. Maturing rapidly our offspring will breed at about 2 weeks of age and we can be grandparents in 6 weeks from the time we first tumbled."



"You know WallyWorm, even though our B. O. may be bad, we achieved sacred status in Egypt. We could probably come close to that in Texas if folks just knew the good we do. Our bovine buddies don't like to dine near their leavings, so we clean up behind them so they will graze that area again sooner. We incorporate their manure into the soil thus preventing almost 80% of the nitrogen from being lost due to volatilization. While doing this, we disrupt the life cycle of the horn fly preventing about 95% of their eggs from hatching."

"Well Mr. Tumble Bug you sure have the right to brag. Some folks would complain if their business was going to "DUNG" but you guys just love it. SO, I toast you with green squeezings and wish you many fresh plops for the New Year."

"Thanks WallyWorm, may your new year be filled with organic matter too."

This movement was peristaltically gleaned from www.attra.ncat.org

(Continued from page 4) **Fruit Trees**

around young trees is critical for survival and rapid growth. Heavy weed or grass competition results in severe nitrogen deficiency (yellow foliage with red spots) and valuable moisture will be taken away from the tree and trees will produce little or no growth and often may die. Ideally, keep the soil surface weed-free in an area at least as wide as the limb spread of the tree. The safest way to do this is with a hoe. Chemicals that will do a good job are available, but they are hazardous if used carelessly. Do not attempt chemical weed control unless all aspects of safety and sprayer calibration are well understood. Applying a layer of mulch around the tree also helps control weeds and conserves soil moisture. Make sure not to layer it too deep around the trunk.

If you would like more information on varieties of fruit trees suitable for our area contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Office in Somervell County at 254-897-2809 or 1405 Texas Drive.

Highlight on a Master Gardener

Greg Marsh



Having grown up in Glen Rose, it's been a real eye-opener since returning three years ago.

The Court House 'WAS' the Court House, housing the County Clerk's office where my Grandad, Aut Newman, used the "hunt and peck" method of typing to record deeds, abstracts, marriage license, etc. The Sheriff's office was also there & the only Court Room was upstairs. The Five point star fountain actually flowed "sulfur water" which smelled like rotten eggs, but was known as "mineral water" and supposedly "was good for you".

Across the street was Martin's Grocery Store. Founded by my Great-Grandfather, they gave credit to just about anyone! If you needed your groceries delivered, you called them, gave them your order and one of the employees unloaded them from the old Ford truck and took them right on in for you. Glen Rose had everything you needed. We had a Coca Cola bottling plant, a dry goods store known as "Milam's". My dad, Maurice, was the only Beautician in town before my mom, Ina Mae joined him there as a beautician several years later. The hills around Glen Rose were alive at times with "Moonshine". I think most eve-

ryone would agree that Glen Rose, Somervell County was a great place in which to grow up. All our schools were located in one block & my graduating class had 33.

My introduction to agriculture/horticulture started with my Grandad and Grandma, Laura Newman, in the community of Post Oak, north on FM 56 about 3 miles. My Grandad was not only County Clerk, he was also a farmer, a 'real' farmer. I remember his two horses, Pet & Rhodie, he farmed with & his first tractor is still on his home place. My Grandma was the gardener who could grow anything. Okra, blackeyed peas, tomatoes, onions, you name it, she would grow it. She raised two girls on the produce that she grew. They lived off the land, raising their own beef, pork, and chicken. Except for some of the luxuries (ie, washers & dryers, dishwashers, refrigerators, & early on, electricity) that we often take for granted today, there was nothing that we have today that they did not have then. I don't know but what those really were "the good old days".

I left Glen Rose in 1964, attended & graduated from Hardin Simmons Univ., where I met my wife, Glenda (from Pasadena TX) of 41 years. We moved to Angleton Texas & raised our two sons there. I worked for Dow Chemical Co for 33 years & Glenda spent 29+ years as a pediatric nurse practitioner after

working as a nursing instructor for several years at our local community college. I retired in 2002 and spent a lot of my time traveling between Angleton and Glen Rose helping my Mom and Dad take care of their farm/cattle in Rainbow.

I uprooted Glenda from her Gulf Coast roots and her 15 year Pampered Chef business to move back to Glen Rose. We built a house on my Grandparents land in the "Post Oak Community" on a Cedar covered Rock Hill.

My Master Gardener training was completed in Brazoria County in 2001. Glenda and I had taken care of 2 acres of yard, mowed grass for 30 years and had plants that you could grow year round without having to worry about being killed by a 15 degree cold spell like we are experiencing at this very time. Our current landscape is very different. We were tired of mowing & I did NOT plan on mowing grass here. We wanted native plants that would survive the HOT summers with very little water. We are getting there. We both believe that water is a true resource that needs to be conserved and we are trying to do our part with a total of approximately 3500 gallons of rain water storage available for the little summer watering we do. Glenda has also completed Master Gardener training here in our county, and we are now trying to cover this rock hill with

See Greg Marsh (Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6) *Greg Marsh*

native plants and grasses, Earthkind roses, a small vegetable garden, & a variety of hummingbird & butterfly plants. Although we are NOT mowing grass 3-4 hours a week, we now spend much more time than that enriching & enjoying our immediate environment. As I attend our Somervell County Master Gardener



Greg, NOT mowing his grass—but tilling for the wildflower plantings at Heritage Park.

Assoc. meetings, I look around the table and although I see only one face that I knew when I grew up in Glen Rose,

Bonnah Brawley Boyd, I see an entire group committed to not only their own education, but the education of others in our community. Master Gardeners are a great group of people that love “playing in the dirt” and love sharing their knowledge & experiences with anyone who will listen!

Start Tomato Seeds Soon

by *Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardener*



Tomatoes. Nothing is better fresh from the garden! And of

course, once you have eaten homegrown tomatoes, you'll never want grocery store tomatoes again! There are many varieties of tomatoes that will do well in our part of Texas. Many people prefer to buy their tomato starts from local nurseries or home garden centers. But for those gardeners who want to try specialty tomatoes or want a favorite heirloom variety, planting from seeds may be the only option. Following a few simple steps will ensure you can have more tomato plants so you can even share some seedlings with friends.

The best time to start tomatoes from seed is generally 6 weeks before last frost—March 15th for Somervell County. That would make around February 1st the appropriate start date. This gardener prefers an extra couple of weeks start, just to make sure the tomato transplants have a good strong start.

Seeds can be purchased from many garden centers, but for the most variety selection, seed catalogs offer your best bet. Most of the sources have online websites for ordering as well.

To start your seeds, use 2 inch plastic pots and your favorite seed starting mix. Purchased, sterile seed starting mix is best. Do not use native garden soil to avoid potential soil borne diseases from compromising your starts. Moisten the soil to the point of a wet but not dripping sponge. Place 2 seeds per pot but BE PREPARED to snip the



weaker of the two if both happen to germinate. Yes, this can be very traumatic – killing the very thing you are trying to grow. But survival of the fittest is your best bet for ensuring a strong tomato plant. If you just can't bear to part with your “babies”, you can carefully remove one seedling and transplant it to another pot and attempt to double your seedling

production.

Place the pots in a 70 degree room under artificial light for 14 hours per day. Keep the light source (fluorescent grow lights work best) just a few inches above the seedlings as possible and raise the light as the seedlings grow. To promote shorter, stockier growth, subject the seedlings to a gentle breeze regularly. Or simply give them a gentle petting every day.

When the seedlings are 6" tall, transplant them to larger pots. 4 -6" should do. Plant the transplants outside, one to two weeks after last average frost day, or by the end of March for us. Be sure to harden them off by letting the plants spend a few hours a day outside a week prior to transplanting. You may still need to protect them from those pesky late freezes that regularly plague our area. This protection can be accomplished by placing old nursery pots or cardboard boxes over the tomatoes when temperatures threaten below freezing.

Resource-Willhite Seed News



SOMERVELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

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Somervell County Master Gardener Officers for 2010

From left: Josh Blaneck—Somervell County CEA, Donna Hagar—President, Barbara Lancaster—Treasurer, Shirley Smith—1st Vice President, Merilyn Cranford—Secretary and Jim Cheatham—Historian

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 Blaneck, Somervell County Extension agent at 254-897-2809 or j-blaneck@tamu.edu or you may email the SCMGA at somervellmg@gmail.com.



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