

SOMERVELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

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SCMGA Newsletter

THE GREEN PIECE

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Texas A&M System

AgriLIFE EXTENSION

It's a Wormy Situation (NOT what you think!) SCMGA Community Horticulture Education Program Monday, June 14, 2010, 6:30 PM Somervell County Citizen Center, 209 SW Barnard

some after attending the Somervell County Master Gardeners Community Horticul-

ture program. The program will be presented by Master Gardener Julie Conner. Her presentation will include beneficial kinds of worms, how to raise and maintain them, and how to "fatten them up". Handouts will be

Got Worms? You'll want provided along with snacks and worm -related prizes. Don't miss this "end of school" fun presentation. Bring a friend, bring the kids and learn all about worms! Monday, June 14,

6:30pm at the downtown Glen Rose Citizens Center, 209 SW Barnard St. Refreshments served.



Somervell County Master Gardeners 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 somervellmastergardeners.org for updates.

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



Favorite Plants of Master Gardeners -Larkspur

By Joan Orr, Somervell County Master Gardener

Common Name/Scientific Name: Larkspur/Cansolida

Native/Adapted: Larkspur is a native to North America and grows well in the South

Height: Two to five feet

Spread: Multiplies easily

Light: Full sun to partial shade

Evergreen/Deciduous: Hardy annual that re-seeds itself

Seasonal Interest: Spring and summer flowers on tall spires

Color/Features: Available in blue, lavender, pink, rose, and salmon

Water: Requires a moderate amount of water/ increase as needed in summer

Maintenance: Little to none

Wildlife: Attracts Bees, Butterflies and Hummingbirds

Deer Resistant: Deer do not seem to have an interest in Larkspur



Comments/Experience with the plant: Larkspur can be found in many colors and shapes. Their flowers grow on spikes and light colored green stems with fern-like leaves. This centuries old plant was once considered a wild flower. Bees, butterflies and hummingbirds frequently visit Larkspur. Its common name was given because of the flower petals resemblance to the back toe of the Lark. It is best to plant Larkspur seeds in cool weather. This easy-to-grow plant will re-seed itself and come back year after year. At the end of the growing season, try gathering the spent flowers for their seeds to share with fellow gardeners. You may transplant Larkspur, but might encounter some difficulties. It is not impossible if you provide good soil and keep the plant moist until it is well-established. Often, Larkspur will start to fade in the month of June, but you can extend the growing season if you keep it watered well. Larkspur is a great choice for cut-flowers and keeps on giving as a dried flower because it retains its rich, vibrant colors after the

drying process. Slugs can be a problem for Larkspur. Hand pick them when they come out in the evening or place a saucer of stale beer near the plant. The slugs will drown in the beer. If they continue to be a problem, dust with diatomaceous earth. Listed below are some of the newer hybrids that will add a variety of color to your garden.

Rosamund – a soft rose color Los Angeles Improved- a salmon pink Blue Spires Improved – a cool dark blue

Source: Southern Living Annuals and Perennials





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June Gardening Tips by Bonnah Boyd, Somervell County Master Gardener

Summertime's hot temperatures have arrived early this June. Remember to monitor and maintain soil moisture on all plants. Dig a few inches below the surface and feel the soil. Water when it is slightly dry.

Maintain a thick mulch layer around trees and shrubs. Don't pile mulch up against the trunk. Mulches in flower beds and garden areas help hold in soil moisture and deter weed seeds from getting a start. Perennial weeds like nut sedge and Bermuda grass can be controlled by an application of a post emergence broadspectrum product, such as glyphosate, with a weed wiper.

Watch for early signs of pests and diseases in your garden. A blast of water upward from beneath the foliage once a week is usually enough to keep spider mites in control. Insecticidal soap sprays work well on aphids. For an effective control of powdery mildew use a low toxicity spray when you first notice the problem. (Refer to May Gardening Tips for other ways to control garden pests.) Fertilize vegetables periodically. Choose a product with more nitrogen than other nutrients. Apply a half-cup per 25 square feet of garden bed area. Beans and peas are the exceptions to this fertilizer suggestion since they produce their own nitrogen on the roots.

This is also a good time to save seed from plants. One way to store the seeds after drying is to place them in a sealed jar in the refrigerator.

You can establish new flowering plants if you water them in well and take a little extra care to keep the soil evenly moist during the first few weeks after planting. There are some great heat -tolerant blooming options such a salvias, yellow bells, pride of Barbados, plumbago and lantana. There are also some colorful foliage plants such as the copper plant, caladiums, and variegated cannas. A few heat-tolerant vines include hyacinth bean, morning glory, passionflower and cypress vine.

Source: TEXAS GARDENER, May/June 2010

Artichokes? In Texas? You Betcha! Submitted by Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardener



Inspired by an article in Texas Gardener Magazine last year, my husband and

I decided to try our hand at growing artichokes. I had never heard of any one growing artichokes in Texas, but figured we might as well give it a shot! We grew two varieties, Green Globe and Violetta. Starting from seeds, our best results came from placing seeds on a damp paper towel in a baggie and transplanting seedlings to 6" pots in August. Artichokes do not like our heat, so when the temp was over 85-90, we moved them indoors. We then planted some of the plants into the garden in November and repotted the rest in one gallon pots to keep in the greenhouse. The greenhouse plants were planted in the garden in January. Ultimately, the timing of putting them in the garden did not make a difference. We protected the plants when temps dropped below 30 de-

grees and they did well, covered, into the teens. We began fertilizing in February by foliar feeding when the plants began to grow vigorously. The plants get big - 3'-4' across! We began harvesting "chokes" in late April through May. Never thought I'd get tired of eating artichokes! We have 7 plants and have now allowed them to flower. And oh my goodness, check out the beautiful blooms!

The artichoke is actually a perennial thistle. All parts of the plant have prickly spines, like many thistles do.

Given that they do not like our heat, they will go dormant and die back in the summer but as long as we keep them well watered they should survive. We'll see what happens this fall!



Lets Go Native By Shirley Smith, Somervell County Master Gardener

No. I don't mean to move out into the woods and eat nuts and berries. I mean let's look at some of our beautiful native grasses. Native grasses have been here for a very, very long time and have adapted themselves to our very harsh environment. They will do their thing and then come back to do it again next year unlike some imported plant you buy at one of the big box stores. The grasses recommended here need lots of sun (we've got that!), very little water (a good thing) and very little of your time (once established).



Let's consider the largest of the "Big Four" native grasses: Big Bluestem (Andropogon gerardii). Andropogon means man in Latin and Gerard is the name of the French botanist who first identified it. Big Blue once ranged far and wide over our vast prairies. Cattle LOVE this grass as well as the American Bison. Some ranchers call it ice cream for cattle. The seasonal grazing of the bison did it no harm, however, when cattle were introduced to this country, it could not tolerate concentrated grazing. This grass makes a pretty addition to any prairie garden. It will grow

from 3' to 6' high, depending upon the type of soil it is in. It has blue-green foliage and interesting flowering heads. There are approximately 24 species of songbirds for which it provides cover and it also provides nesting sites for several others as well as providing seeds for nourishment. It will also attract butterflies and is the larval host for the Delaware Skipper and the Dusted Skipper. It is highly deer resistant. It prefers rich, sandy soil but will tolerate even acid or calcareous soil and will grow in Somervell County.



The second native I would like to talk about is Big Muhly (Muhlenbergia lindeimeri). This is really a pretty grass to have in vour garden. It is native to the Edwards Plateau of central Texas but will do well in any garden that is well drained. It is a large-scale, elegant grass growing to between 2' to 5'. It is a perennial bunchgrass with wispy foliage and a fountain-like form. It will die back in the winter, but even then it is still pretty with the dried grass heads blowing gently in the wind. Another plus: it is deer resistant.

Want a good, drought, heat, and extreme-cold tolerant lawn grass? How about giving Bouteloua curtipendula a try? What? O, yes, that's Buffalograss. Buffalograss appears soft and graygreen to blue-green and grows to 3"-12" high. It spreads by rhizomes. It is a long-lived, warm-



season, sod-forming grass that has curly leaf blades, slender stems and compact seed heads. Buffalograss has been very popular as a lawn grass since the late 1980s. It requires only about $1\frac{1}{2}$ of water per month to live making it extremely drought tolerant compared to most other lawn grasses. Buffalograss is a good source of nesting and denning materials with the seeds being eaten by many birds. The Zabulon Skipper butterfly calls this host plant home for its larva. All in all, Buffalograss is a good, lowmaintenance lawn grass. There are many other native grasses you might want to consider - too many for mentioning here. If you would like to find out more about our Texas native grasses, you can go to www.wildflower.org/collections and search to your heart's content.

Sources: Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Native Plant Database; Grasses of the Texas Hill Country by Brian & Shirley Loflin (Texas A&M University Press-College Station)



Tomato Insect and Disease Control Submitted by Josh Blanek, CEA-AG/NR Somervell County

One of the most popular vegetable crops for Somervell County homeowners to grow is tomatoes. Our tomato crop this spring is looking pretty good for the most part. The warmer, sunny days and adequate moisture have helped most tomato plants. In order to insure a good fruit set and nice, red, plump tomatoes at harvest time, gardeners need to monitor their plants carefully for disease and insect infestation. As the plants begin to grow,

gardeners need to watch for disease infection on plants. Early Blight and Septoria Leaf Spot will damage the foliage. These can be controlled



through the use of a fungicide such as Mancozeb and Chlorothalonil. As the plants set

fruit gardeners should mulch around plants and use cages to

keep the fruit off of the ground to prevent fruit rot.

Insects attacking the plant foliage and knocking off the blossoms are the soft bodied insects known as aphids. These can be controlled with insecticides such as diazinon or malathion. A natural insecticide that can provide control for the aphids is nicotine or gardeners can simply wash insects off of the plants using high pressure water sprays.

As the fruit enlarges, the tomato hornworm and the tomato fruitworm will feed on both the plant foliage and fruit. Control of

these insects can be hornworm obtained by apply-

ing Bacillus thuringiensis. The tomato pinworm can also cause damage to both fruit and plants. Carbaryl (Sevin) is labeled for the control of this pest. Once the tomato has set fruit,

sidedress the plants with one

level tablespoon of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) around each plant. This application of fertilizer is important in the final sizing of the fruit on the plant. Try to maintain a constant water supply on your tomato plant. Don't allow the soil to become overly dry and then too wet. It may be helpful to mulch around the base of the tomato plants. This helps prevent the soil from drying out guickly. By maintaining a constant water supply. one can prevent cracked fruit and blossom-end-rot.

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Texas Master Gardeners 2011 State Conference

GOT ANY PINT JARS?

Be a Part of the 2011 State Master Gardener Conference! By Glenda Marsh, Somervell County Master Gardener

Recycle your extra GLASS PINT JARS! Somervell Co. Master Gardeners need your extra pint jars for their April 2011 State Master Gardener Conference to be held here in Glen Rose. Your

unused jars will be used for table decorations for a 'down home good time' in Glen Rose. Jars may be dropped off at the Extension Office behind the Expo Center or call The Marsh's, 898-8379, to arrange for pick-up of larger quantities of jars.



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Tomato



Wade's "WallyWorm Word" "Glomalin"

by Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener

WallyWorm has no eyes. So, let us pretend he can see microscopic organisms in the soil anyway. Wally may not have a big red 'S' but he can still be a superworm and focus on other residents of his habitat.



One of his neighbors is Molly Cool. Molly is a molecule of glomalin, a alvcoprotein that contains

30% to 40% carbon. Our old friend arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi grows and makes glomalin by using the carbon from plants. The fungi attach to the plant roots and send out hairlike filaments, called hyphae, to funnel

more water and nutrients to the plant. Glomalin is formed on the outside of the hyphae, providing a seal and rigidity, enabling the hyphae to span the air spaces between soil particles. When the hyphae stops transporting nutrients, the glomalin sloughs off into the soil. The sticky molecule is tough, as well as having a lot of strength and stability, and attaches itself to particles of levels in minerals, forming aggregates. These aggregates, encased in a parts per web of glomalin, retains the carbon in the soil.

Glomalin contributes much soil than do hyphae or other soil microbes. Glomalin contains 27% of the carbon in the soil compared to humic acid's 8%. Glomalin lasts from 7 to 42

years. Soils with a high content of glomalin, in some cases, can qualify for carbon credits.

The carbon dioxide levels for the mid to late century is predicted to be 670 parts per million in comparison to today's level of 370 parts per million. Mycorrhizal fungi subjected to

carbon dioxide the 670 million range produced



more nitrogen and carbon to the hyphae three times as long and produced five times as much glomalin.

> From: usda.gov website. By Don Comis of the USDA Agricultural Research Service.

Editors note: Okay so in reading Wally Worm's article this month, I have to admit, my inclination was to just scratch my head and say "Huh"? But I have to admit, I've learned a lot from 'ol Wally, so I stopped, and reread the article v e r y, v e r y s l o w l y. And things started to make sense—a little. And being editor of the SCMGA Newsletter, I know a few good pictures always add to an article so I set out to find "something graphic" that might help enhance Wally Worm's word dejeur. Low and behold, I did find several! In addition, I stumbled on another article on Wally Worm's Word Glomalin and realized it goes hand in hand with our monthly article submitted by Shirley Smith on the use of native grasses. See page 4. And it just seems appropriate to share even more of Wally's Wealth of Wisdom. This excerpt is taken from the same source of the above article. Enjoy!!! Donna Hagar

"In a study at two Mandan, North Dakota, locations, Kristine Nichols, a microbiologist with the ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory, found that soils under native grasses—switchgrass, blue grama, big bluestem, and indiangrass—have higher levels of glomalin than soils planted to nonnative grasses, such as Russian wildrye, intermediate wheatgrass, crested wheatgrass, and western wheatgrass. "The more glomalin in a particular soil, the better that soil probably is," Nichols says.

Native Grasses Mean More Glomalin

In 2004, Nichols collected soil under monoculture grass plots established between 1987 and 2002. She found that the amount of glomalin in the soil increased as the degree of interdependence increased between plants and arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi. These fungi produce glomalin and live inside plant roots and in the surrounding soil. The fungi have hairlike filaments called "hyphae" that extend the reach of plant roots. The plantfungus interdependence is greatest in warm-season native grasses, such as switchgrass, blue grama, big bluestem, and indiangrass."



One of our Own, Bob Lancaster Wins National DAR Conservation Award Submitted by Sandi Stringer

Bob Lancaster, member of the Somervell County Master Gardeners, recently received the National DAR Conservation Award and Medal. He received this award because of his interest in and support of Somervell County and its history, specifically for his volunteer efforts with the Somervell County Master Gardeners and the Somervell History Foundation.

Bob & his wife Barbara retired and moved to Glen Rose about 10 years ago. His plan was to play a lot of golf and hang out the "gone fishing sign" but instead he soon became involved with community activities. After reading about the Master Gardener Program in a local newspaper, he signed up for the training, and in 2001 was part of a small group that formed the Somervell County Master Gardener Association. He served 3 terms as president and was a member of the steering or planning committee. Bob was instrumental in recruiting new members, establishing educational programs for both the public and Master Gardeners, designing & creating gardens throughout the community, always keeping in mind that the

Master Gardener's mission is to educate the public, both adults and children, on maintaining sound gardening practices. Bob has written multiple articles &. garden tips for local and area newspapers as well as the Somervell County Master Gardener Newsletter. He is Chairman of the EarthKind Rose Committee and in that capacity has been instrumental in getting an Earth Kind Rose Trial Garden in Glen Rose, which is part of a national research based project developed by Texas A & M extension. The roses used are studied to identify the most disease & pest resistant, heat & drought tolerant & lowest maintenance needs. Many of you may have purchased some of the EarthKind Roses such as Knockout, Mutabilis, and Carefree Beauty.

Bob has also served on the Board of Directors of the Somervell History Foundation. This group owns & maintains Barnard's Mill on the banks of the Paluxy River in downtown Glen Rose. The historical structure was built in 1860. His contributions in the effort to restore this structure have run the gamut from planning & designing a proposed landscape that will include water conservation and use of native & adapted

plants, and working with the board to successfully receive grants from the Texas Historic Commission for restoration. Or... he might be mowing, pulling weeds, & doing general handyman work. He was also instrumental in helping the Somervell History Foundation raise funds to place a larger than life bronze statue on the Somervell County Courthouse Square. His gardening expertise was invaluable in helping to create a landscaped area around the statue that lends a natural and native look of early central Texas

Bob has served in many other areas of community service such as the Hospital Authority Board, the Glen Rose city panel to review & improve the landscape ordinance, the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors of which he was president one term and was selected for the Chamber of Commerce Wall of Fame in 2005. He is always willing to make time for sharing his talents. Bob is truly a community leader who cares deeply about preserving remnants of the past as well as preserving our environment for future generations.

Submitted By Sandi Stringer

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Somervell County Master Gardeners Association

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 <u>j-</u> <u>blanek@tamu.edu</u> or you may email the SCMGA at <u>somervellmg@gmail.com</u>.



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