



**SOMERVELL
COUNTY
MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**

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SCMGA Newsletter

THE GREEN PIECE



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“The Hummers Are Coming!”

SCMGA Community Horticulture Education Program

Monday, March 14, 2011, 6:30 PM
Somervell County Citizen Center, 209 SW Barnard

For the past three years, approximately around the middle to end of March, the hummingbirds have begun to arrive in Somervell County. It is time to again begin to prepare for their arrival. Our very own Somervell County Master Gardener (and bird enthusiast), Glenda Marsh, will share her Top Ten Tips for attracting these beautiful and amazing little birds. Glenda will have a PowerPoint presentation showing habitat enhancers and other

wonderful tips to help us help them! So, please come join us Monday, March 14, at 6:30 pm at the Citizens Center, 209 SW Barnard, in downtown Glen Rose. We will have refreshments, too! See you there!



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
- * Fall Vegetable Gardening
- * Gourds
- * 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!

Wade's WallyWorm Word - "MICELLES"

Submitted by Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener



Wade is visiting WallyWorm. Knowing spring is nigh, Wade mentions that he is going to try one of the plant tonics he has been reading about.

"Is that like an iron tonic?" asks WallyWorm

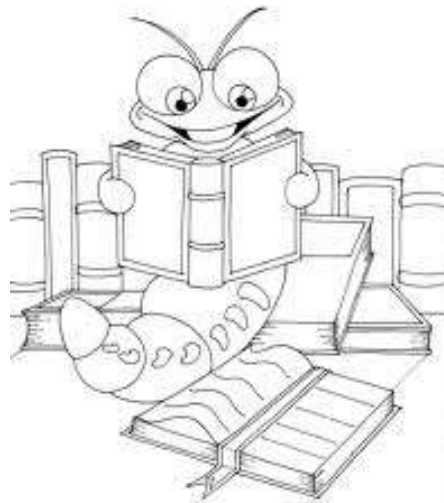
"No, this tonic is a combination of natural occurring compounds found in several different plants. By using colloidal chemistry, scientists have developed, through nanotechnology, molecules called micelles. Micelles in the tonic are about one to four nanometers thick. One nanometer is one billionth of a meter, or about the width of ten hydrogen atoms. A human hair is around 90,000 nanometers across. Matter in miniscule sizes of less than fifty nanometers fall into the quantum physics category." answers Wade

Wade continues "In the world of quantum physics, the traditional laws of physics and chemistry no longer apply. Materials take on new properties. Something that was red may now appear to be green, metals may become transparent and thus becoming invisible, non-conductors may become conductors, non-magnetic material may become magnetic, and insoluble substances may dissolve. The micelle molecules in the tonic are so miniscule that their positive charge attracts other positive charged molecules, which is the opposite of positives attracting negatives found in normal physics. The tonic molecular composition allows it to diffuse into the plant cells, providing energy and nourishment to the cell. This increased vitality allows the plant to produce more sugar during photosynthesis. Hence, the combining of six water molecules with six molecules of carbon dioxide, with radiation from the sun, photosynthesis takes place making one molecule of basic sugar and six molecules of oxygen. Therefore the tonic assists the plant in producing more sugar.

More sugar means more food for the root system and its surrounding biomass fed by the roots. The biomass return mineral solutions and such to the roots which is then pulled back to the leaves. This higher sugar content (higher Brix reading) in the plant directly affects the health of the plant. Most insects will avoid attacking those plants with a high sugar content because for the lack of a liver in order to digest the sugar, leaving the sugar to turn to alcohol and eventually killing it."

"You know, if I wasn't so sweet already I would ask for a little snort of that tonic myself." replied WallyWorm

Information leaked from the stomata of [nanogreen-science.com]



"Wade, you are so over my head! I'm going to do my own research!" exclaims WallyWorm. "There has got to be an easier way to learn this stuff!"



Companion Planting Tips for Vegetable Gardens

by Nancy Hillin, Somervell County Master Gardeners

Here are a few pairings of vegetables, herbs and flowers that will improve the taste and production of your vegetables and at the same time keep some pesky insects at bay.

Basil has the reputation of enhancing the flavor and overall growth of tomatoes.

Carrots are not compatible with dill and tomatoes.

Cantaloupes should be planted away from cucumbers and gourds.

Cilantro is harmful to fennel.

Corn does well with beans, squash, or melons and makes great shade for shorter crops.

Cucumbers do well with corn, cabbage, beans, radishes lettuce and tomatoes. Try planting marigolds and radishes to deter cucumber beetles. Keep sage away from cukes.

Dill gives flavor to cole crops and is good for onions and lettuce. Plant an abundance as dill is the one host plant (another being milkweed) to the larva of the Monarch butterfly. Dill can reduce growth of carrots and tomatoes. Dill is also useful for its ornamental value.

Eggplant can be planted with tarragon and thyme. For optimum growth, place eggplants away from borders and edges of the garden as it does not like to be jostled about.

Garlic, when planted around a garden, is thought to keep rabbits out.

Lettuce is best grown near straw-

berries, beets, or cabbage. It will tolerate a lot of shade.

Marigolds have a growing reputation as helpmates for potatoes and tomatoes. They have long been known as excellent pest repellents.



Melons will do well when planted near nasturtiums and radishes.

Nasturtiums are great for trapping aphids or to repel white flies, cabbage pests and squash bugs.

Onions like companions such as beets, cabbage, strawberries, or lettuce. Sage should not be planted near onions.

Oregano is a fragrant member of the mint family that is a good general pest repellent.

Peas may be planted near tomatoes, eggplants, lettuce, spinach or peppers. Also, peas do well when paired with tomatoes, eggplant, lettuce, spinach or peppers.

Pepper growth is promoted by planting them near marjoram, basil, oregano. Peppers also do well with carrots and onions. Fennel is thought to harm peppers.

Potatoes like to be near onions, radishes or lettuce.

Radishes will be tender when planted near peas or lettuce. They are the perfect companion to set between lettuce, bean,

cabbage and tomato seedlings. As a companion to squash, radishes supposedly can prevent borers, particularly if they are allowed to go to seed. They have been known to repel cucumber beetles.

Rosemary with its strong pleasant scent has a reputation for pest repellency. Branches laid on the garden rows are thought to keep slugs and snails at bay.

Sage helps cabbage, carrots, strawberries and tomatoes. Sage has been known to harm cucumbers. Sage and onions have the reputation of not doing well together.

Spinach does best when planted near strawberries, cabbage, peas or onions.

Squash is a good companion for corn, beans and radishes. Nasturtiums are a great companion flower to deter squash bugs.

Strawberries like to be planted near lettuce, spinach or beans.

Tomatoes will fail near fennel or potatoes. They do well when planted near basil, parsley, cabbage, carrots or sage.

Thyme is thought to improve the flavor of surrounding herbs and vegetables. Use thyme along with a delicate flower such as alyssum or lobelia around your garden for a beautiful edge. Thyme's coloring and shape will also compliment spinach, broccoli or red cabbage. Thyme is thought to repel whiteflies, cabbage loopers and cabbage-worms.

Source: *Good Neighbors: Companion Planting for Gardeners* by Anna Carr

Favorite Plants Of Master Gardeners

Cypress/Cardinal Vine

By Bonnah Boyd, Somervell County Master Gardener

Common Name: Cypress vine/cardinal vine

Scientific Name: Ipomoea quamoclit

Adaptable to most areas of Texas

Grow in sun to partial shade

NOTES In spring, once temperatures stay securely above 50 degrees both day and night (April - June), plant seeds in a warm, sunny location in ordinary garden soil 2 to 3 inches apart and 1/2 inch deep. Firm soil over seeds and keep evenly moist.

Erect well anchored supports at least 6 to 8 feet tall at planting time; strong netting, fence or trellis serve well to hold these climbers.

This annual vine twines up effortlessly and produces feathery foliage. At midsummer, a profusion of dainty tubular flowers in shades of light pink, rose, white or scarlet open to five-pointed stars. The blossoms attract hummingbirds. It reseeds profusely.



Plant Oddities

by Shirley Smith, Somervell County Master Gardeners

I have a live oak that I can walk from the base of its trunk to its top and never leave the ground. This one tree measures 50 feet from its base to its "top," but is never more than 4 feet off the ground at any one time.



It seems that this stand of oaks on our property was growing just fine until one day along came some

very invasive and nasty neighbors: Ashe Junipers (or, as we Texans call them, cedars). Yep, there went the neighborhood. These oaks had grown very slowly, getting stronger each year. Several of them grew statuesque and tall. The cedars moved in, began to grow quickly and, before you knew it, they (the cedars) had begun to cast shade on the young live oaks. These cedars shot up very tall in

order to reach the sunlight leaving the young oaks to fend for themselves. But, the young live oaks would not give up. Nope! They began to grow along the ground toward the sunlight. Several of the oaks in this manse grew in the shape of a sea serpent with coils going up and down until they at last reached the life-giving sunlight. These "twisted" oaks are healthy. The only difference between them and their larger live oak neighbors is their unusual shape. There is a line from the movie Jurassic Park spoken by Jeff Goldblum whereby he states "nature always finds a way" or something to that affect. And, indeed, nature found a way for these trees to reach the sunlight they so badly needed in order to continue to grow.

If you have a plant oddity that you would like to share with the Somervell County Master Gardeners, please email us at somervellmastergardeners@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you.

AROUND THE FEEDER

The Cute, Curious, Charismatic Carolina Chickadee

Submitted By Joan Orr and

Nancy Hillin, Somervell County Master Gardeners



Nancy Hillin

This little songbird is so curious it has been known to eat out of a lucky backyard birder's hand.



The Carolina Chickadee is a delight to watch as it performs its antics. This aerial acrobat has excellent balance and will often land upside-down on a feeder or branch to eat. In the spring and summer, the Chickadee becomes one of our "wild helpers" by devouring harmful insects in our gardens. In the off-season when insects are not readily available, we can help by providing feeders. Favorite foods include sunflower seeds and fruits and nuts. Hang feeders a short distance from trees or shrubs so the birds can make a quick get-away from raptors such as hawks and owls and predators like cats and snakes. If you are plagued by squirrels, try using a squirrel-resistant feeder to keep the seed for the birds and the squirrels out. Suet feeders are a good source of fat in the winter months and not intended to be used above 70 degrees. Consider planting trees, shrubs and ground covers that will aid the Chickadee and all birds by providing food and shelter. Birch, Elm, Eastern Red Cedar, Dogwood, Pine,

and Red Bud would be good choices or plant any native tree. Shrubs and vines favorites include American Beauty Bush, Carolina Jessamine, Cherry Laurel, Coral Honeysuckle, Pyracantha and Viburnum. Chickadees are year-round residents of the Southeastern United States from South of the Great Lakes to Northern Florida and to Central Texas. As permanent residents, they have developed the capability of lowering their body temperature in the winter months to induce an internal state of hypothermia called torpor. It helps the chickadees to preserve energy and they have been known to spend up to 15 hours at a time in torpor. If you should come upon a chickadee that is unresponsive, chances are it is in torpor. They should be left alone while in this hibernation as any stress could cause death.

The sexes are similar in markings and color. Once paired a couple may remain mated for long periods that often last as long as two or more nesting seasons. Chickadees are the only small bird with the combinations of a black cap, black bib and white cheeks. It's under parts are white with rusty brown on the flanks with a gray back. This underrated bird is the first to nest in the spring in March

and April and are usually finished by the time other birds are ready to nest. Favorite nesting spots are cavities in tree stumps and old Woodpecker nests. The nest is cleverly constructed from plant down of milkweed,



cattails, feathers, fur (most particularly rabbit fur), hair, moss and insect cocoons. The first layer in the nest is moss and any mammal hair that can be found. The second layer is mostly fur. The female lays her eggs under this layer to deter any inquisitive visitor from finding an easy meal. An average brood is 5 to 13 young annually. Males feed their mate during courtship and incubation of the eggs. The speckled eggs take 11-14 days to hatch. Both parents take care of the young until the nestlings fledge, which is usually about 13-17 days bringing us more of Nature's little miracles in flight.

Sources:

Aggie Horticulture.tamu.edu

Field Guide to the Birds of Texas



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<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_blanek@tamu.edu](mailto:blaneck@tamu.edu) or you may email the SCMGA at somervellmg@gmail.com.



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