



**SOMERVELL
COUNTY
MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**

**SCMGA
Officers 2010-2012**

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SCMGA Newsletter

THE GREEN PIECE



Volume 3, Issue 5

May 2010



Bedazzling Buzzing Bees SCMGA Community Horticulture Education Program

***Monday, May 10, 2010, 6:30 PM
Somervell County Citizen Center, 209 SW Barnard***



Don't miss the excitement created by our own honeybees, Dwain Cleveland and Greg Marsh, local apiarians (bee keepers). Actual examples of empty hives,

'supers', smokers, bee suits and more will be shown! So bring the kids, come on down, join us for this "show 'n tell" and PowerPoint presen-

tation that will be entertaining, fun, enlightening AND will help us understand why we need to "save those Bedazzling Buzzing Bees"!

Monday, May 10, 6:30pm at the downtown Glen Rose Citizens Center, 209 SW Barnard St. Refreshments served.



Somervell County Master Gardeners Win Awards

Back in January of this year, the Somervell County Master Gardeners Association ("SCMGA") Awards Committee presented 4 separate awards to the State to be considered for special recognition. They were: Individual, Newsletter, Project and Education. At the Awards Banquet, which was part of the Texas State Master Gardeners Conference recently held in Dallas, it was announced that the SCMGA received 1st Place for their Newsletter "**The Green Piece**" and 2nd Place for their Publication on "**Earth-Kind™ Roses**". The next time you are in the County Extension Office, you may see these awards hanging proudly on the wall. If anyone is interested in receiving the newsletter via email, please send your request to somervellmg@gmail.com.

Favorite Plants of Master Gardeners - Autumn Sage

By Bob Lancaster, Somervell County Master Gardener

Common Name/Scientific Name: Autumn Sage/*Salvia greggii*

Native/Adapted: Native

Mature Height: 2-3 feet

Mature Spread: 2-3 feet

Light: Part shade to Full Sun

Evergreen/Deciduous: Nearly evergreen

Seasonal Interest: Blooms from early spring (March) until fall (first freeze). Blooms and then fades and then blooms again and the cycle goes on and on.

Color/Features: Varieties can be found in bright red, pink, white, and coral. Grows in most soils. Foliage a medium to dark green.

Water: Drought tolerant, periodic watering produces more flowers, but plant does not like to stay wet, needs good drainage.

Maintenance: Low maintenance. Some trim back plant in early spring by 1/3 to 1/2 to keep them low growing. If you keep snipping off the plant tips (after flowering), the plant will bloom constantly from spring to frost.



Wildlife: The flowers attract numerous butterflies, moths and hummingbirds.

Deer Resistant: One of the best flowering deer-resistant plants

Comments/Experience with the Plant: We have a problem with the deer eating most everything we place in our garden, so this is one of the best performers for us. *Salvia* gives great color and performance with minimum care and maintenance. The word *salvia* means “to heal” and was once used for many medicinal purposes. Maybe that’s why the butterflies and hummers love it.



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 somervellmaster-gardeners.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

May Gardening Tips

by Carolyn Norman, Somervell County Master Gardener

1. When tiny spider mites are causing mischief in your garden, reach for this recipe:
4 cups of wheat flour
1/2 cup buttermilk
5 gal of water
Mix all ingredients together, pour the mixture into a hand-held sprayer, and mist-spray your plants to the point of run-off.
2. This powerful powder will help your tomato plants fend off nasty diseases:
3 cups compost
1/2 cup of Epsom Salts
1 Tbs of baking soda
1/2 cup of powdered nonfat milk
3. Tuck some garlic bulbs into the soil among the roses. When the bulbs sprout, they will deter cane borers, aphids, rose chafers, and Japanese beetles.

Combine the first 3 ingredients in a bucket. Add a handful of the mix to the planting hole. After planting, sprinkle a little of the powdered milk on top of the soil. Repeat every few weeks during growing season.

Reference: Supermarket Super Products by Jerry Baker

Project 2010 Rosebush

Remembering Bill Cowan

By Bonnah Boyd, Somervell County Master Gardener

Wm. (Bill) Cowan, Jr.



Bill Cowan was a proven civic leader of Somervell County. He began his 23-year teaching career as Voc-Ag teacher of

the Glen Rose Independent School District in 1955. The Paluxy River was the reason for his remaining after he retired. "It's the most beautiful river of all," he said. After retiring he continued to work for the community. He was president of the Glen Rose-Somervell County Chamber of Commerce during the creation of Dinosaur Valley State Park, conducted tours at the State

Park, was an organizer of what has become the Somervell County Youth Fair, assisted with the placement of the Veterans Monument on the courthouse square and led the effort in the late 1970's to plant 100 Blaze roses around town to 'put the ROSE back in Glen Rose'.

The Glen Rose Chamber of Commerce and the Somervell County Master Gardeners are continuing this effort begun by Bill Cowan by announcing the 2010 Rose Bush campaign. It is a beautification project for the city and county. Businesses and residents are encouraged to plant roses at work places and at home. More information and order forms can be obtained online

at either the Chamber of Commerce website, <http://www.glenrosechamber.com/2010rose.html>, <http://www.glenrosechamber.com/PDF%20Files/RoseOrderForm.pdf> or the Somervell County Master Gardener website, www.somervellmastergardens.org, or see the [informational brochure](#). Order forms may also be obtained at the Chamber of Commerce office downtown. Roses come in one gallon containers and are \$12 each.



Highlight on a Master Gardener

Becky Altobelli



I grew up in the "The Winter Garden District of Texas" the south Texas town of Uvalde to be specific, on an in-

town ½ acre lot with 15 pecan trees, pear, loquat and fig trees and formal flower beds filled to the brim with irises, roses and Mexican petunias tended lovingly and often by my mother. As a teenager I begrudgingly mowed and edged the yard for allowance money. My parents even had to bribe me to weed and dead-head one summer to get me out in the yard and fresh air away from my favorite past-time, reading. I appreciated my mother's beautiful garden and yard and I could see how much she enjoyed her time outside, but there was always a book calling me back inside and away from that outdoor space.

After high school graduation I left that oasis of backyard beauty and calm for college

(dorm and apartment living) then marriage (apartment living or short-term Navy assignments) then work (long days as an R.N.) and then children (hands full of fun). I always had books to fill leisure time during those years (and still do) but somewhere in my late thirties as the kids grew more independent and doing their own things, with time on my hands and the purchase of a house with a ½ acre yard, I began to appreciate the yard as a place I could get a boost, both mentally and physically. Working in the garden became fun and rewarding. I remember talking to my parents on the phone during that time, discussing specific plants or asking for their suggestions and detecting their pleasure and amusement as their daughter became a gardener. I guess they always knew I would (don't parents always know best).

Then, after moving to Glen Rose in 1996 (this time to a home with 22 acres) and developing our home gardens and yard (with my husband Tony too, of course!) over the

next few years, one of my daily walking partners brought up the idea of taking the Master Gardener course offered by the Somervell county extension service. I came to know the actual botanical names of some of my favorite plants, plants of my mother's garden and a scientific explanation for some of success and failures of my landscapes and gardens. Wildflowers were given a new respect in the garden and old favorites were reinforced as essential survivors for our Texas gardens. In addition, a whole new world of botanical wonder (weeds, insects and all) opened up. New friends came along with the course curriculum also, and the now monthly gardening activities where I continue to get that physical and mental boost. Gardening books and magazines have expanded my reading lists and library. I regret starting to garden so late in life but do enjoy the thought of gardening in all my days forward.



Becky hard at work at our last two monthly workdays. That's Becky on the wheelbarrow on the left while SC Ext Agent Josh Blanek looks on. And Becky again on the right, digging with Sandi Stringer.





Mulches - An Easy Way to Reduce Work and Water Use

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

Mulching is one of the most commonly used and best management practices for homeowners in maintaining flower beds and vegetable gardens. The use of mulch can be helpful in reducing the need for weeding, conserving moisture, improving soil quality, and improving the looks of your landscape. You receive all of these benefits simply by mimicking Mother Nature's use of dead plant material.

If you have ever walked through an area of thick trees, you probably noticed lots of leaves and twigs piled up. And generally underneath the mat of material it is wet and very few weeds are germinating. It is exactly this concept that we are implementing when we apply mulches to our landscape. The first thing to remember about mulch is that it can be any dead plant material. Organic materials such as dead leaves, twigs, grass clippings and shredded trees all make excellent mulches. Don't forget about the wonderful mulch we can get for free at our local transfer station on Hwy 56.

The first and most common use of mulch is to conserve water. Mulch insulates and protects the soil from drying out and baking in the sun's heat. Mulch allows the soil to have less fluctuation in temperature and gives the plants roots a more favorable growing

environment. During the hot part of the summer non mulched bare soil often becomes caked over and can reach temperatures of around 120°F. At this rate it doesn't take very long for soil moisture to be depleted.

The second use of mulch is to improve the soil quality. Mulch helps improve soil quality by breaking the force of rain and irrigation on the soil thereby preventing erosion, crusting, and soil compaction. In addition, when using organic mulch microbes in the soil, beneficial insects will break down the material supplying the plants with nutrients and soil microbes with energy so that the uses of commercial fertilizers are more efficient. Just ask "WallyWorm" about that.

Finally, mulches help prevent weeds from germinating and taking over your landscape. The use of mulches to control weeds is safer than using herbicides and often less expensive in the long run. Mulch decreases the amount of light that is available to the seed and prevents germination while at the same time adding beauty to the landscape.

While the use of mulch is great, they must be managed properly. Just as the mulch prevented moisture evaporation from the soil, they can prevent moisture from getting to the soil if they are applied too heavily.

When applying mulches you usually want to put a layer of mulch from 2 to 6 inches deep. Coarser mulch such as thick pine bark is applied more thickly than fine mulch like grass clippings. Around trees and shrubs four inches of loose fibrous material generally works well. Apply the mulch in a donut fashion around the plant allowing the plant to be the hole in the donut. Be careful not to mound the mulch to high around the tree trunk as this can cause problems. Finally, it is a good idea to lay soaker hoses or drip irrigation down with the mulch on top of the hoses. This allows you to water the plant without having to soak through the mulch layer.

The use of mulch in your yard is not a miracle cure for all your weed and water problems. However, rather than spending weekend after weekend pulling weeds and watering, it can give you one or two free weekends to go fishing and have a beautiful yard.

For more information on landscape maintenance you may contact the Somervell County Extension office at 254-897-2809. Don't forget that Somervell County residents are able to get free mulch from the county at the transfer station off Hwy 56, call 254-897-3727 for more information and for hours of operation.

Wade's "WallyWorm Word" "Pill Bugs"

by Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener



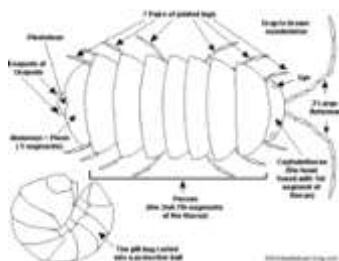
WallyWorm feels heavy plodding vibrations in the soil and pokes his head out to find the disturbance.

Why it's Wade, the semi-derriered vegetable garden guru. "Where were you last month?" inquires WallyWorm. "On the briny waters, mate. Glad to be back and to see your pointed head, WallyWorm", replied Wade.



"What new neighbor are you introducing me to today?" asks Wade. "Well, here comes my roly-poly pal, Pete, the pill bug piddling past. I'll tell you about him after he has gone by. You never know how 'crabby' a crustacean like Pete can be when being talked about", answered WallyWorm.

"Did you know he is related to shrimp and crayfish? Why he is the only true terrestrial isopod; you know the ones with fourteen legs, so do not confuse him with being an insect. He breathes through gill like structures yet he can't survive if submerged in water", continued WallyWorm.



"Originally Pete started out as an egg in his mother's marsupium pouch, hatching there and remaining there for several days before leaving to be on his own. He will have molted his exoskeleton 4 to 5 times by adulthood. The back half of the exoskeleton molts first with the front half molting a few days later", continues WallyWorm.

"Pete is a true blue blood kind of guy. Literally, he bleeds blue because his hemocyanin contains copper ions and appears blue when oxygenated. So, if you see him and he is a bright blue, it isn't his blood causing it, but an iridovirus. Pete rarely feeds on live vegetation, but on decaying plants and animals, hence he is not considered a pest. He needs damp areas to keep replenishing his body moisture. If he needs to, he can take in water through his rear end as well as his mouth. You would think that Pete would urinate a lot with all of that water intake, but the ammonia in his waste water is passed as gas through his exoskeleton, so there is no need for

Pete to urinate", adds WallyWorm.

"Poop is another issue. Yep, Pete eats a lot of poop; including his own. When Pete poops, precious pieces of penny properties are passed. That is just a corny way of saying he loses copper and Pete practices coprography to replenish this life sustaining element", whispers WallyWorm. "I used to have a dog that did that. Called her Excretia", blurted Wade.

"Well anyway, Pete can roll up into a ball for protection against spiders and such. His relative, the sow bug, can't do that. Pete also contributes organic matter to the soil as well as removing toxic metal ions from the soil. Pete is a decent sort of 1/2 inch armadillium vulgare in spite of some of his ways', concluded WallyWorm.



Information gathered from: pest-worldforkids.org-- enchantedlearning.com-- University of Arizona-- Dr. Jonathan Wright of Northwest State U., Aberdeen S.D.—and, about.com



Nine members of the Somervell County Master Gardeners recently attended the Texas Master Gardener State Conference held at the Omni Hotel in Las Colinas. The conference was hosted by the Dallas County Master Gardeners. Conference attendees attended educational sessions, tours and workshops.

SCMGA Members Attend TMGA State Conference

Submitted by Donna Hagar

The Somervell County Master Gardeners and Lake Granbury Master Gardeners will be hosting the 2011 TMGA Conference in Glen Rose in April of next year. This event will be a full three days of educational sessions, tours and workshops and is anticipated to bring 800 to 1000 Master Gardeners from all over the state of Texas. Both groups are busy planning and preparing for what is sure to be

one of the most unique conferences in TMGA history!

To see what the two groups are planning, visit

www.2011tmgaconference.org.



**Texas Master Gardeners
2011 State Conference**

Rainwater Harvesting Program at Citizen Center

Submitted by Donna Hagar



Julie Conner showing some of her backyard art rainwater uses.

On April 13, 2011, Somervell County Master Gardeners Greg Marsh and Julie Conner presented an informative program on the benefits and how-to's of rainwater harvesting. Both Julie and Greg are Rainwater Harvesting Specialists, having attended Specialist training and earning additional volunteer hours to obtain the certification.

Julie began the program with information and statistics on not only why collecting and using of rainwater for landscape use is beneficial for plants, but how it saves chemical runoff from entering our lakes and streams and polluting our ground water systems. She explained with the

growing population in many areas, harvesting rainwater will be a continual necessity.

Greg then showed several practical applications for various rainwater harvesting systems. He also explained how much rainwater can be harvested in just one simple one inch rain. Greg had photos of several Somervell County Master Gardeners and residents rainwater systems, as well as a unique system in Menard County that utilizes rainwater for a complete household system.

The program was very well attended and one lucky participant went away with their own 55 gallon rain barrel!



Greg Marsh with a 55 gallon rainwater harvesting barrel.

LADYBUGS

(The Beetles of Our Lady)

By Joan Orr, Somervell County Master Gardener



Ladybugs are well known as good luck charms. The reasoning behind that luck goes back about 500 years to Europe where farmers found aphids sucking the juices from their grapevines. These farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary for help. Their prayers were answered in the form of tiny sphere shaped red beetles that ate the aphids. The farmers considered this a miracle. This miracle insect was promptly named after the Virgin Mary, **Jesus' Mother, who is also known as "Our Lady."** At first, the farmers called the small miracle insects, the beetles of Our Lady and then shortened the name to lady beetles, and finally ladybugs. From this beginning and through the centuries ladybugs have developed a reputation for bringing good luck to anyone and anything they touched.

The life cycle of ladybugs contains four stages. They are the egg, the larvae (LAHR-vee), the pupae (PYOO-pee), and the adult. It takes three to four weeks to complete the cycle from egg to adult. Ladybugs are highly recognizable in the adult stage, but are often overlooked or misidentified in the larvae stage. They are almost alligator to lizard shaped miniatures about 1/16 of an inch long and flocked with orange or yellow. Lady bug larvae are active hunters that crawl rapidly over plants in search of food. You will probably find them in groups feeding and you maybe intimidated by their looks. But, rest assured that after they progress to the pupae stage and finally to the adult ladybug stage, they will be one of the best natural pesticides available. The pupae resemble adult lady bugs, but have softer bodies and pad like wings. Next, they shed their old bodies and full grown ladybugs emerge. Then, the cycle repeats itself with females and males mating and



the female laying eggs. She lays 5-30 eggs in clusters on the underside of

leaves near colonies of other insects suitable for food for the larvae. It is possible for her to lay as many as 200 to 1000 eggs over a three month period of time. From egg to adult takes three to four weeks.

The adults are shiny and sphere shaped with six short legs and antennae. Their heads are hidden underneath the front of their thorax. Females are larger than the males. Lady bugs come in many colors including the most familiar one red, but you will see ladybugs that are orange, yellow, gray and black. Their antennae help the ladybugs to seek out their favorite food. They not only feed on aphids, but enjoy a diet that includes other soft bodied insects, small caterpillars, insect eggs, mites and other small beetles. Ladybugs also like pollen and nectar and can be found feeding on clover and alfalfa. Some other pollen favorites are calendula, chives, cosmos, dill, mustard and sweet alyssum.

There are 5000 species of ladybugs world wide and 450 native to North America. Some of the more common species to this area are the twice-stabbed ladybug, the seven spotted ladybug, the nine spotted ladybug, the Asian ladybug and the convergent ladybug, which has 13 spots. The later is raised commercially and sold to farmers and gardeners. Ladybugs are the most familiar and widely recognized predators of garden pests. They belong to the order Coleoptera and the family Coccinellidae.

Sadly, ladybugs have their own predators to deal with in order to survive. Martins and Swallows are some of the birds that will try to include ladybugs their diets. Some insects that will try to have a ladybug lunch are ants, assassin bugs, and dragonflies. Ladybugs have their own unique defense system to discourage predators. If danger is imminent, ladybugs emit a bad smelling and bad tasting chemical from their legs and joints. It is known as reflux bleeding. The yellow substance not only has a repulsive taste to predators, but it will also stain anything it touches. Another defense mechanism

of the ladybug is to draw its legs under its body, roll or fall over and play dead. The bright colors of ladybugs send a warning to predators that they will not make a good meal. Ladybugs are equipped with a special pair of wings called elytra (EHL-uh-truh) which protect their bodies from some predators. These wings are tough-leather like and cover their first and the more fragile set of wings. When ready for flight, the elytra pops open and allow the first pair of wings to function. When the first wings are not in use, the elytra closes over them to offer the harder shell-like protection. Also, depending on the predator, they will use their mandibles to pinch in order to defend themselves.

The average life span of the ladybug is about one year, although the Asian ladybug can live two to three years. An adult ladybug can live in a state of diapause (an insect's version of hibernation) for up to nine months. They engage in diapause to conserve resources and facilitate reproduction. When in diapause they live off their own energy reserves. Ladybugs can be found around tree trunks and logs, under ground cover, in buildings and homes when temperatures fall below 55 degrees. Although, they may be guilty of invading structures, they will not reproduce there. The Asian ladybug is the species that is most invasive. Sealing windows and cracks will prevent them from coming into a house. They require heat from their environment to maintain and regulate body temperatures and cannot fly when temperatures are below that 55 degree mark. When the temperature begins to rise and food sources become available, the ladybugs become active.

Sources:

The Ultimate Guide to Backyard Bugs and Garden Insects of North America
Texas Bug Book
Texas Gardening, the Natural Way
Everything ladybug.com
How stuff works.com
Wikipedia.com



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



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