



**SOMERVELL
COUNTY
MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**

**SCMGA
Officers 2008-2010**

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SCMGA Newsletter

THE GREEN PIECE



Volume 2, Issue 11

November 2009

Trees for Somervell County

With Carrie Smith

SCMGA Community Horticulture Education Program

Monday, Nov. 9, 2009, 6:30 PM Somervell County Citizen Center

Carrie Smith, Staff Forester I with the Forest Resource Development & Sustainable Forest of the Texas Forest Service, will present a program on trees for Somervell County. She will talk about selecting the right site and the right tree for the purpose you are wanting, i.e. shade, aes-

thetics, etc. and give some specific trees that do well in Somervell County. Choosing trees that are native or adapted to our area will ensure that we have a healthy and long enduring landscape.

For more information you may visit our website at

www.somervellmastergardeners.org or call 254-897-2809



Earth-Kind® Roses

Thursday, November 19, 2009 - 6:30 pm

Storiebook Café,

502 NE Barnard, Glen Rose, Tx



The Somervell County Master Gardeners are hosting an Earth-Kind® Rose program at Storiebook Café, on Thursday, November 19 at 6:30 pm. Storie Sharp has graciously agreed to open her store for this special program. Garey Wylie, Johnson County Master Gardener and true Earth-Kind® aficionado, will highlight all 21 varieties of Earth-Kind® Roses to help in your selection of these easy care roses. He will also explain proper site location, planting techniques and care requirements that give these roses the best chance for outstanding performance that brought them the Earth-Kind® designation. This program is also an opportunity to order Earth-Kind® Roses as part of the Project 2010 Rose Bush. For further assistance on selection and care of the Earth-Kind® Roses, contact the Somervell County Master Gardeners at 254-897-2809 or somervellmq@gmail.com.

Put the Rose Back in Glen Rose Project 2010 Rose Bush

By Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardener



Project 2010 Rosebush is a joint effort by the Somervell County/Glen Rose Chamber of Commerce and Somervell County Master Gardeners. The goal of the Project 2010 Rose Bush is to have businesses and homeowners plant 2,010 Earth-Kind® Rose bushes in and around Glen Rose and Somervell County as a means of beautification and bringing back roses that were once abundant in our area. While not the native wild roses that once dotted the hills of Somervell County, Earth-Kind® Roses are a perfect choice for the landscape for both businesses and homeowners because of their high level of performance and ease of care.

The Chamber of Commerce office is the coordinator of Project 2010 Rose Bush, while the Master Gardeners will offer advice on selection and care of the roses. Orders for the EarthKind® Roses can be placed through the Chamber office, their website, www.glenrosechamber.com or contact grcc@glenrosechamber.com.

All roses are in one gallon containers, are \$12 and must be prepaid.

For further assistance on selection and care of the Earth-Kind® Roses, the SCMGA has put together an informative brochure. You may view the brochure at our website, www.somervellmastergardens.com, or [here](#). We have also set up an Earth-Kind® Rose Advisory Committee that is available to consult with local business and homeowners on selection and care of these Roses. Contact the Somervell County Master Gardeners at 254-897-2809 or somervellmq@gmail.com.



On October 20, 2009, fourteen Somervell County Master Gardeners and several County employees met at the eastern edge of Heritage Park and planted 24 Earth-Kind® Red Knockout Rose Bushes along the new split rail fence adjacent to the parking lot for the River Walk. This Somervell County Master Gardener pro-

ject is an ideal opportunity to showcase the EarthKind® Roses and coincidentally falls in perfect timing to highlight and promote the new Project 2010 Rosebush.



Project 2010 Rosebush compliments another "perfect timing" opportunity, as the Somervell County Master Gardeners and Lake Granbury Master Gardeners will be co-hosting the state Texas Master Gardener Conference in Glen Rose in April of 2011. What better way to show off our beautiful community to the potentially 1000 Master Gardeners from all over Texas who will be descending on Glen Rose in 18 months!



**Texas Master Gardeners
2011 State Conference**

Favorite Plants of Master Gardeners

Luffa

By Nancy Hillin, Somervell County Master Gardener Intern

Common Name/Scientific Name: Luffa / L. Aegyptiaca

Native/ Adapted: Luffa is a tropical plant well adapted to this area

Height: 12-20 inch fruits on vines

Spread: Runners and climbers

Light: Full sun and will tolerate some shade

Evergreen/Deciduous: This is an annual plant and dies after 1 full season

Seasonal Interest: Flowers in early summer, young fruit used like squash or cucumbers

Color/Features: Yellow Hibiscus-like flowers/mature fruits makes a sponge

Water: Likes water in a well-drained soil

Maintenance: Little required

Wildlife: The yellow blooms can be a temptation for some for some wildlife.

Deer Resistant: Yes

Comments/ Experience: If you have ever purchased a “loofa” sponge for your bath, you might have imagined that it was made from something from the sea or some other mysterious material. To the contrary, it is made from a fascinating plant that you may grow in your own yard. It is a tropical gourd, belonging to the cucumber family. It is also called the “towel gourd” or the “vegetable sponge”. The accepted spelling is Luffa.

Luffa will grow in many different sizes and shapes, similar to cucumbers, squash, and gourds. It is best to trellis Luffa in order to support the fruits. When the fruits are young, it may be cooked and eaten like squash. There is a sweet variety that may be sliced and eaten like cucumbers. At maturity, the inside of Luffa is a mass of spongy tissue that can be harvested and processed for various household uses.

Luffa seeds are available from most seed companies. As with growing squash, a soil with humus and well-rotted manure is essential. Usually, I plant Luffa seeds the same time I plant cucumbers, after all danger of frost has past. Luffa used for sponges are not mature and ready to harvest until just before the last frost. It is a long growing season, but well worth the wait.

When Luffa turns a light brown, it is ready to harvest for sponges. Another way to know when Luffa is ready to pick is when you can hear the seed rattle inside the Luffa when you shake it. Refrain from letting the skin becoming too dry, as it makes it difficult to peel the Luffa. In case some slip by you and do dry out too much, just try soaking them in a container of water for a few hours. After peeling the skin from the Luffa, shake all the seeds out and save for the next year's planting.

Take the Luffa you want to use as bath sponges and place them in a mild bleach solution for only ONE minute. This softens the Luffa. Try to make sure most of the seeds are out of the sponge. Next, machine wash on a gentle, cold water cycle with little to no detergent. NEVER put Luffa in the dryer, as it will shrivel to nothing. Luffa is a great gift. Just add some bath or shower items to the gift bag. Most recipients are pleasantly surprised at this useful gift that you grew just for them. The Luffa you would like to use as a dish rag or scouring pad should not be bleached. It is not necessary to wash these. Just cut with scissors into the sizes and shapes you would like to have in the kitchen.

Luffa always goes back to its original shape after being wet.

To view a color photo of this plant visit our website at www.somervellmastergardeners.org.

Source: *The Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening*



Highlight on a Master Gardener

Joan Orr



The records of the Somervell County Master Gardeners show I have been a Master Gardener since 2005, but it seems like I have been in training for gardening since I was a preschooler. I can remember when I was four years old working and, of course, playing in my Grandfather's garden. I always believed anything he told me and tried to be an active participant in most things he did on the farm. Grandfather's vegetable garden was always large and I loved to help from start to finish. He taught me an easy way to grow potatoes in a wire cage. Just put a layer of slips on the ground in the cage and start layering hay on top of the slips. When the plant starts showing green add more hay until the plant reaches the top of the cage. The potatoes are ready when the vines die and then you may harvest from the bottom of the cage up to the top.

My Papa was a great inspiration to me also. He raised cotton, sugar cane and hogs. Grandmother made me a toe sack with a strap to go over my head that was just my size so I could pick cotton just like the grown folks. I managed one sack almost full of cotton and proudly took it to Papa. When he tried to hand the empty toe sack

back to me, I pretty much let him know that I did not want anything else to do with cotton or that toe sack! But, I did like to help with the sugar cane harvest. I would take the canes and make teepees out of them. As my reward for all my small efforts, I could chew on small sticks of the sweet sugar cane. When I was about ten years old I joined all my older cousins to "stomp the silage" of the sugar cane. It was a process to remove the remaining juices from the cane. Even after I was an adult I could still tell by the smell where there was silage as far as ten miles away!

My Mama raised geese for their feathers. I helped her pick, dry, and stuff the feathers to make the most comfortable pillows and mattresses. Of course, Mama always had beautiful flowers. I still grow the same phlox and larkspur she had in her garden. I took the seeds from her plants and have faithfully taken the seeds with me on any move I have made the last 40 years. These old, faithful plants return for me each year in my garden. Among the phlox and larkspur, Mama had other favorites such as cannas, zinnias and roses.

I was born in Keller, Texas and my family and I lived there until I was a senior in high school. I married in 1954 and that union produced my five children. We lived in Roanoke, Texas for about fifteen years. During that time I was active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Chapter in

Roanoke. I served as vice-president in 1968 and as President in 1969. I was a member of the Methodist Church in Roanoke and enjoyed singing specials for the services. I now enjoy singing specials and backup at the First Assembly of God in Glen Rose where I am a member. As fate would have it my marriage dissolved. I went to work at General Motors in Arlington in 1972 where I met my recently departed husband, Bill Orr. We married in 1974 and shortly thereafter we moved to Glen Rose. Bill already had four children and with my five our union has produced 20 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren and another great-grand child on the way.

The year 1979 stands out in my memory as a great garden year. We lived on 30 acres west of Glen Rose and had plenty of space for a large garden. We had a great harvest of almost anything you can imagine (just like my Grandfather had in his gardens). I would pick black-eyed peas and process two canners full before going to work on the evening shift at General Motors. We also had 31 baby calves that year that I feed on the bottle for three months. Besides taking care of children, calves and my flower and vegetable gardens, I have been a caregiver to five family members. I took care of my husband, Bill until he left this world on August 29, 2008. My

(Continued on page 5)

Joan Orr, continued

(Continued from page 4)

good friend and fellow Master Gardener, Clara Merrill, also left us in October 2008. She and I had attended the Junior Master Gardener training in Georgetown, Texas in June 2008.

In 1997 we moved from the farm outside of Glen Rose to inside the city limits. I live near Heritage Park and with great pleasure I have participated in the EarthKind Rose Field Trial Garden that the Somervell

County Master Gardeners started in 2008. I retired from General Motors in 1987. I joined the Glen Rose Garden Club in 2000. I have served as Historian from 2003 to 2004, as vice-president from 2005 to 2006 and again as vice-president in 2008 to 2009. Also, I served as President from 2006 to 2008. Since completing the Master Gardening training in 2005, I have met many new and wonderful friends. Presently, I am serving on four committees

in preparation for the Texas Master Gardener State Conference to be hosted jointly by Somervell County Master Gardeners and Lake Granbury Master Gardeners in April 2011. I am looking forward to this event and I am sure it will be fun and beneficial to our communities.



Herb Program

Somervell County Master Gardeners Yvonna Brown and Becky Altobelli presented their Herb Program to a roomful of guests at Storiebook Café on Oct.

6. Many people came early to dine on special herb dishes prepared by Storie Sharp and her staff. Becky and Yvonna focused on herbs that grow well in this area of Texas, describing growth habits and both culinary and medicinal uses for the various herbs. Several newly ordered herb books were on display and could be purchased by those who were interested. Potted herbs were given as door prizes to a few lucky people and many guests commented on what an enjoyable and informative program it was. A special thanks goes to Storie Sharp of Storiebook Café for allowing us to have the program there.



Bee Program



Dwain Cleveland, whose business card identifies him as The Bee Man, is a hobbyist bee-keeper that has a passion to

save and relocate bees, a side benefit is honey that he harvests from his 20 hives. He

showed an excellent video at the CHES program in Oct. that described the members of the beehive i.e. the worker who is a female, the Queen, and the Drone who is the male and then fielded questions from the guests. If honeybees ceased to exist today, about 1/3 of all foods we eat would disappear because there would be no pollination. Cleveland discussed CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder) that has affected the bee

population. Scientists have been working to determine if a fungus, bacteria, or virus is the culprit for the bee's demise. Lastly, he described the construction of a "man made beehive" and encouraged us to be a part of the process to save bees. If you have a problem with bees, Mr. Cleveland does hive removal and can be contacted at 254-897-2792 or 254-396-0655. It was an interesting program enjoyed by all.

Bringing Plants Indoors for the Winter

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



With the beautiful fall days, cool crisp mornings and Halloween just around the corner one can't but help but to think that our first frost must not be too far away. The Texas Almanac lists Somervell County's average first freeze as October 29. And our fall has been cooler and wetter than normal this year. The cooler temperatures often result in a migration of potted plants from patios to garages and dining rooms. Although this is often necessary to protect your tropicals from cold weather, extended periods inside may result in other problems.

Lumping plants in a garage may solve the freezing problem in the short run, but being parked in those conditions for extended periods of time can produce other problems.

Plants in garages are often neglected with less water and low light levels. Think of your garage only as a storage site for a couple of days at a time, not as a cheap and convenient alternative to a winter greenhouse.

Unfortunately, we forget that plants are living creatures with specific needs. Too often we treat them like simple decorations, forgetting to take their needs into consideration.

Unlike a picture or a coat rack, your plants need you to think carefully about where you place them. A coat rack could care

less if you put it in a dark corner where you need something tall. However, your ficus tree will tell you about it right away its dislike by dropping leaves.

If you only bring them in for a day or two, then there's not a real problem. Extended stays should be planned visits. Find a bright window that doesn't get direct sun beaming through, and place your plants near it in a group. They will grow better with the higher light levels while your recliner easily adjusts to its new home on the other side of the room away from the window.

Plants placed inside will also have lower humidity. Grouping plants together will help. Also, placing trays of gravel with water that can evaporate under plants is one way to increase the humidity. One of the reasons most potted tropical plants - notice that I didn't say "houseplants" - thrive better on patios than inside is because the humidity outside is closer to their native climate in the tropics.

Temperature fluctuations and drafts are a big problem in the winter. Try to avoid putting plants directly under heater vents. The warm, dry air will cause them to dry out quickly. Also, placing plants in front of busy doorways will result in rapid temperature changes every time the door opens.

Overcrowding can also produce pest problems. One notorious plant pest is the Spider mite. You often find spider mites on plants left inside in crowded conditions. These critters seem to spontaneously appear from thin air. If they appear, you will have to take your plants outside and spray it with an approved miticide as soon as possible. Waiting a few days may result in severe damage and dieback.

Spider mites are not your only problem. Other common indoor pests you might see include the cottony white mealy bugs on ficus or African violets, and fungus gnats flying out of the pots and soil of almost anything. Again, early detection and treatment is critical.

Plants that are left on patios tend to not get these problems because they have better air circulation and a population of beneficial insects around to keep pests under control. Sometimes, simply putting a plant outside at the first signs of problems will solve them without using pesticides, but doing both is often a better option.

Next, don't forget to water your plants. I'd recommend doing that a day before taking them inside, allowing them to be fully hydrated and drained before you move them. Unfortunately, that also makes them heavier. However, we often forget to wa-

See [Indoor Plants](#) (Continued on page 7)

"WALLY WORM WORD" - "CALCIUM"

by Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener

WallyWorm uses the world as his stage and wants to let all of you meet one of his companions of his habitat. Meet number 20 on the periodic table, that major positive charged cation, that metallic element who is the world's fifth most abundant mineral. Ladies and gentlemen give a warm welcome to the "KING' of the nutrients", your pal and mine : CALCIUM.

Hey WallyWorm, just call me CAL. Thanks folks, it is a pleasure to be here. I brought a few of my buddies along because I am much too active to exist in a pure state; so I may exist as calcium hydroxide, calcium carbonate, calcium sulfate, and calcium phosphate to mention a few. Back to you WallyWorm.

Thanks CAL. Friends, I know a lot of you use CAL to adjust the pH of the soil. True, an excess of CAL can push the pH up and low amounts of CAL can pull the pH down. But, I recall microbiologist William A. Albrecht of the University of Missouri words. "Don't lime to fight soil acidity. Use lime to feed the plant." He also taught that if soil CAL wasn't high enough, the plants would throw their fertility back to the clay instead of drawing it from the clay to the plant. Hence the correct concentration of CAL in the soil is extremely important for optimum plant production.

A deficiency of CAL in the soil can sometimes be predicted by the presence of certain plants we normally refer to as weeds. I am going to ask CAL back to read you a list of some of these plants. This list was gleaned from "WEEDS' control without poisons" by Charles Walters. Mr. Walters also contributed to this presentation through the February 2009 issue of ACRES usa, Please welcome back Cal.

Thanks again WallyWorm. Well here goes. Barnyard grass, Beggarticks, Hedge bindweed, Japanese brome grass, Common burdock, Crabgrass, Woolly croton, Dandelion, Woolly cupgrass, Curly dock, Pale dock, Dogbane, Fleabane, Giant foxtail, Goatgrass, Ironweed, Jimson weed, Johnson grass, Junglerice, Russian knapweed, Ladysthumb, Lambsquarter, Prickly lettuce, Little barley, Wild morning glory, Common mullein, Carolina nightshade, Nutsedge, Fall panicum, Pigweed, Prickly sida, Puncture vine, Purslane, Ragweed, Ryegrass, Sandbur, Broadleaf signalgrass, Smallflower galinsoga, Smartweed, Red spangletop, Sunflower, Velvetleaf, Vervain, Wirestem muhly, Witchgrass, and Yellow rocket.

Whew, I'm out of breath WallyWorm. I'm going to the showers. I sure hope you don't have to clean the shower after I have been in there; hard ions you know.

Let's give CAL a big hand folks. CAL does us all a great service. Come back again next month for my new WallyWorm word. So I bid you "adieu". Kind of a smart alec word for a worm, don't you think ?

Source: Acres USA, www.acresusa.com

(Continued from page 6) Indoor Plants

ter plants while they are in the garage or inside, and a dry plant will not handle the stress of movement and temperature fluctuations as well as its well-watered counterpart.

One last potential problem may

be keeping animals away from your plants. Cats can be deterred by putting a little powdered cayenne pepper in the soil or by placing bark chips on the surface, making it harder for them to find soil. Dogs are a little harder to control, but perhaps a new squeaky toy or

rawhide bone may distract them. Whatever the situation, just take time to think about your plants' needs this winter during their indoor stays. Your planning will result in a greener future for both you and your potted tropical plants.

It's Not Too Early To Start

by Greg Marsh, Somervell Co. Master Gardener



Want a Spring garden? I know, it's November but it IS time to get started. So decide: Where am I going to put it?

What type of soil do I have? Am I going to have a "typical" garden with long rows? Will I use the soil I have? Drag hoses over to water? How much sun will it get? While these questions are important, having the correct soil is probably the most important aspect of a successful, productive garden. If you need to resolve any of the above issues, it may take you four months to get ready for a spring vegetable garden.

Location, drainage and soil preparation are the keys to success when it comes to any gardening effort. Most vegetables, herbs, flowers, fruits will do best growing with a minimum of 6 to 8 hours of sun. Although exceptions to this rule, let's focus on vegetables, herbs and fruits.

Drainage and soil preparation go hand in hand. Preparing the soil is the most important element of the vegetable garden. If we do not spend the time to prepare the soil correctly, we will be wasting our time, money and effort to plant seeds or transplants and expect them to produce vegetables that we can eat or cook. Organic matter, preferably compost is THE key to having "good soil". We know the correct use of soluble fertilizers (chemicals) is an option to have optimum growth, but if you work at enriching the soil with enough compost, you may find that using chemical fertilizers is

not necessary. While we may fail by planting the wrong varieties, planting at the wrong time, or in too much shade, if we do not prepare the soil, we will definitely fail. So, let's take a look at how to prepare our garden soil.

The three most common soil type possibilities include clay soils, sand and of course, the rock hill. In the case of the clay and sand, ask yourself if it is worth it to amend them or do you build and use raised beds. Clay soils are difficult to work with, but they can be amended with enough organic matter (compost) to hold nutrients and water. At times a clay soil with lots of organic matter can still hold too much water. If you have clay soil and you have amended it with compost, work your beds into raised ridges and plant on top of the ridge. Planting on the ridge will simulate a "raised bed" and will to some extent help you solve your drainage problem.

Sandy soils are extremely easy to work, but the water and fertilizer leach rapidly through them. Once again, the key is to add organic matter to the soil to aid in having the appropriate nutrients and ability to hold the appropriate amount of moisture for plant growth. Mixing in 4 to 6 inches of compost to the sandy soil will make a tremendous difference. Additional problems you can experience with sandy soils include gophers and nematodes. The gophers will tunnel under your vegetables and munch on them while the nematodes attack the roots. While your compost will contain beneficial micro-organisms, it will not slow down the gophers, which will have to be exterminated.

The ultimate answer to the heavy clay soil, sandy soil, or rock is the use of raised beds which work especially well. You can use all sorts of building materials to construct the raised beds—2X12 boards work fine, or you can use rock, broken concrete, or railroad ties. The soil mix is the most critical component for raised beds. Mix your own soil consisting of one part organic matter (compost), one part top soil, and one part aggregate (coarse sand, perlite, vermiculite). You can also purchase a mix from some soil yards. There are some recipes that call for one part vermiculite, one part compost and one part peat moss. Once you get the mix in your raised beds it will settle over time. When this happens, the best thing to add to your bed is compost. Another advantage to the raised beds is that they are 'easier to work' and can save you some stress and strain on your body parts.

Two of my favorite 'help' books include *Southern Kitchen Gardens* by William Adams and Thomas LeRoy, and *Square Foot Gardening* by Mel Bartholomew. These contain good 'prep work' information as well as good varieties to plant in our area.

No matter which method of soil preparation you ultimately decide to use, enjoy the time you spend preparing for those fresh home grown vegetables you'll enjoy growing and eating.





**SOMERVELL
COUNTY MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**

Josh Blaneck, CEA AG/NR
Texas AgriLife Extension
Service
Somervell County
P. O. Box 895
Glen Rose, TX 76043
[http://somervell-
co.tamu.edu](http://somervell-co.tamu.edu)

Phone: 254-897-2809
Fax: 254-897-9323
E-mail:
somervellmg@gmail.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 j-blaneck@tamu.edu or you may email the SCMGA at somervellmg@gmail.com.

