



**SOMERVELL
COUNTY
MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**

**SCMGA
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SCMGA Newsletter

THE GREEN PIECE



Volume 3, Issue 9

September 2010

“Brew Up Your Own Compost Tea”

SCMGA Community Horticulture Education Program

Monday, September 13, 2010, 6:30 PM
Somervell County Citizen Center, 209 SW Barnard

Join our own Wade Moore & fellow Somervell County Master Gardeners to learn the what's, how's and why's of brewing your own compost tea. We all know compost is good but compost tea is even better. Wade will be presenting not only his personal experiences using compost tea but new data on why using compost tea in our gardens and landscapes is so beneficial.



September Gardening Tips

Submitted by Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardeners

- Spring flowering bulbs need properly drained soil. Prepare beds now for planting.
- Wildflowers can be planted this month and in October. Make sure seeds come in contact with bare soil for best seed germination.
- Divide and plant spring flowering perennials such as iris, oxeye daisy, can-nas, daylilies.
- Vegetables: plant beets and carrots from seeds, broccoli and cabbage from starts in early September, lettuces and other leafy vegetables toward mid to late September.
- Remove old seed heads from crepe myrtles and roses for a new flush of growth for fall beauty.
- Remove dead leaves and stems from perennials but hold off on major pruning until mid-winter.

Wade's WallyWorm Word - "Brix"

Submitted by Wade Moore, Somervell County Master Gardener

“Hey!! Wade in the shade; que pasa?” yells WallyWorm.

“Just sitting here under this old post oak tree contemplating how to increase the Brix number for the garden.” replies Wade.

“Well make up your mind. First you pick up the rocks and now you want to put bricks back in. You are close to loco man” chants WallyWorm.

“WallyWorm, the B-R-I-X I am talking about is pronounced the same as your b-r-i-c-k-s, but my Brix represents a weight to weight ratio for dissolved solids in solution.” says Wade.

“Well, whoop dee doo, that explains everything.” scoffs WallyWorm.

“Okay, I’ll start anew. One Brix number or degree corresponds to one gram of sucrose in one hundred grams of solution. In the garden, this degree of sugars, carbohydrates, minerals and the like in solution in the plant is helpful knowledge. For example; if the Brix reading is higher after applying certain treatments to the plant,

then I know the sugar content of the plant has increased, which is good.” continues Wade.

“The degree or percentage of sucrose in solution can be measured with a refractometer, an instrument containing a prism, which in turn establishes a read-out on a Brix index. The Brix number can then be compared to a refractive index of crop juices. For example, if I get a Brix reading of 6 on beet juice, that is a poor result. If the Brix reading is 8, that is average. 12 is excellent. Sweet corn ranges from 6 (poor) to 24 (excellent). So, you see the Brix index and readings are really a useful tool in plant production.” concludes Wade.

“Well, I am certainly glad you took the time to enlighten me on Brix. I thought you were a might tetchd there for a while.” ended WallyWorm.

The juice for this BRIX article was extracted from the HIGH BRIX GARDENS and WIKIPEDIA web-sites.



Refractive Index of Crop Juices — Calibrated In % Sucrose Or °Brix

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
FRUITS				
Apples	6	10	14	18
Avocados	4	6	8	10
Bananas	8	10	12	14
Blueberries	10	14	16	20
Cantaloupe	8	12	14	16
Casaba	8	10	12	14
Cherries	6	8	14	16
Coconut	8	10	12	14
Grapes	8	12	16	20
Grapefruit	6	10	14	18
Honeydew	8	10	12	14
Kumquat	4	6	8	10
Lemons	4	6	8	12
Limes	4	6	10	12
Mangos	4	6	10	14
Oranges	6	10	16	20
Papayas	6	10	18	22
Peaches	6	10	14	18
Pears	6	10	12	14
Pineapple	12	14	20	22
Raisins	60	70	75	80
Raspberries	6	8	12	14
Strawberries	6	10	14	16
Tomatoes	4	6	8	12
Watermelons	8	12	14	16
GRASSES				
Alfalfa	4	8	16	22
Grains	6	10	14	18
Sorghum	6	10	22	30

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
VEGETABLES				
Asparagus	2	4	6	8
Beets	6	8	10	12
Bell Peppers	4	6	8	12
Broccoli	6	8	10	12
Cabbage	6	8	10	12
Carrots	4	6	12	18
Cauliflower	4	6	8	10
Celery	4	6	10	12
Corn Stalks	4	8	14	20
Corn (Young)	6	10	18	24
Cow Peas	4	6	10	12
Cucumbers	4	6	8	12
Endives	4	6	8	10
English Peas	8	10	12	14
Escarole	4	6	8	10
Field Peas	4	6	10	12
Green Beans	4	6	8	10
Hot Peppers	4	6	8	10
Kohlrabi	6	8	10	12
Lettuce	4	6	8	10
Onions	4	6	8	10
Parsley	4	6	8	10
Peanuts	4	6	8	10
Potatoes	3	5	7	8
Potatoes, Sweet	6	8	10	14
Romaine	4	6	8	10
Rutabagas	4	6	10	12
Squash	6	8	12	14
Sweet Corn	6	10	18	24
Turnips	4	6	8	10

Within a given species of plant, the crop with the higher refractive index will have a higher sugar content, higher mineral content, higher protein content and a greater specific gravity or density. This adds up to a sweeter tasting, more minerally nutritious food with lower nitrate and water content, lower freezing point, and better storage attributes.

Winter Weed Control in Home Lawns

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



Did you enjoy the fall like weather we had last week? What a break from the

hot, dry days we had in July & August. It's hard to imagine that fall is just around the corner, but it is. The Glen Rose Tigers are playing Friday night high school football under the bright lights at Tiger Stadium and the Cowboys are playing on Sundays and the first day of autumn is the 23rd. All of this, including the wonderful blessing of rain we received before Labor Day weekend brings to mind a very important lawn maintenance strategy, fall pre-emergent application. It's not too late to prevent the majority of these weeds from becoming major headaches this spring though.

Each spring across Somervell County, lawns are invaded by broadleaf weeds and winter grasses. Some of the most common are dandelions, annual ryegrass and Texas winter grass. Another culprit of ruining spring time lawns is a small clump grass called Poa Annual or Annual Bluegrass (right) and



the dreaded Henbit.

(right) What most homeowners do not

realize is that these weeds begin to germinate in early fall and will not begin to show themselves until late winter when rain and warmer temperatures begin to return.

Control of both winter and summer turf grass weeds starts with good cultural practices such as proper mowing heights, proper mowing intervals, good fertilization programs, and a good watering program that supports deep root development. In some cases though, the use of herbicides are needed to get these weeds under control! A good first step is to use a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent the weed seeds that are present from germinating. In Somervell County pre-emergent herbicides should be applied in mid September, give or take a few days, dependant on environmental factors. Timing is everything when using a pre-emergent. Waiting too late will only cause less than desirable results.

When looking at pre-emergent it is important to look at the label to make sure the product is la-



beled for the type of grass that you have and that it controls the weeds you are after. After applying the herbicide at the labeled rate, be sure to water it in with at least ½ inch of water.

This insures the herbicide is moved down in contact with the top layer of soil where most of the weed seeds are germinating. Allowing the product to lay out in the sunlight reduces the effectiveness of the product.

Hopefully, a little effort this fall will go a long way in getting



your yard off to a good start next spring. Don't forget, if summer weeds have been a problem, late February is a good time to put out a pre-emergent for summer weeds such as crabgrass and grass burs.

For more information on landscape maintenance contact the Somervell County Extension Office at 254-897-2809.

Bearded Iris

By: Sandi Stringer, Somervell County Master Gardener

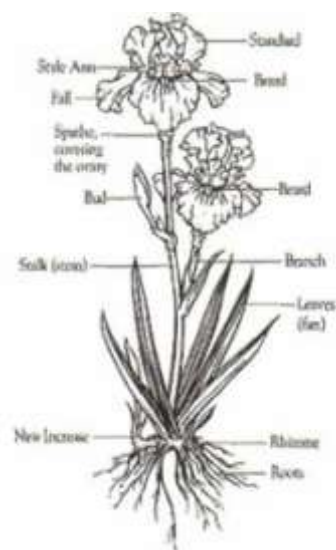


Most of us are familiar with the bearded iris and have often seen them on old vacant farmsteads in the country in full spring bloom. When I see a plant like that surviving, I think hmm, there's something that can be easily grown. In the genus *iris* there are about 200 different species and the most commonly grown is the bearded iris. It's a hardy perennial that requires little care and is basically disease and insect resistant.

Facts and tips in growing irises:

- They need a definite winter season and typically don't do well in the Deep South or in coastal areas.
- Water requirements are low; in fact, over watering will likely kill them.
- Plant them immediately after you get them because they need 6-8 weeks to get well-established before winter begins.
- Every 3-4 years you should dig, thin, and replant bearded irises in late summer or early autumn. (that would be now!)
- Keep the rhizomes, which have white roots and green leaves and discard the rest.
- For easier planting, trim the roots to 2 inches long, cut the leaves back to about 6 inches in length with the center leaf of the fan being the longest. Tall bearded irises (over 27") should be planted 12 –18" apart. Medium irises (10"-26") should be planted 8"-12" apart. The space is needed for them to expand as they multiply.
- In warmer climates, plant the iris with the top of the rhizome just below ground level. In colder climates, plant the iris about ½ to 1 inch deep.
- Water well after planting; then water again in a couple of days. After that, normal rainfall should be adequate.
- Fertilize your irises twice a year using a formula that is high in phosphorus. DO not feed lawn fertilizer to them because it is high in nitrogen, which causes lush growth and little to no flowering.
- Ideally feed them 6 weeks before bloom time and about 6 weeks before winter.
- As you dig each of your favorite irises, use a Sharpie marker to write the iris name or color on the center back of the leaves. Trim the roots and leaves as previously described and place them in a cardboard box or paper sack, not plastic. Keep them cool and dry but not refrigerated.
- Replant within 2-3 weeks if possible.

Source: Iris Society of Fort Worth, Texas



What? - Butternut Squash???

By: Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardener



This is in fact a butternut squash! Argonaut Hybrid Butternut Winter Squash to be precise. Obviously not your ordinary butternut! But every bit as good if not better! We have grown the Waltham variety of butternut before and just loved them. But my husband loves to experiment and try new varieties and when he found the Argonaut squash in a seed catalog, he had to give it a try. And let me tell you, IT WORKED! We have just two plants. One took off immediately and has just about covered a 10' x 40' (yes that is forty feet!) raised bed where she resides. We have cut the vines back



probably by half on more than one occasion. The squash start out green in color which looks a bit like watermelon rind. But as they ripen they will turn into the fleshy beige color as seen in the pictures. So far, we have harvested about 13 squash, the largest weighing about 18 pounds!

Fortunately there are only a couple yet to harvest! And tasty – oh my goodness. These guys are good – sweet, meaty texture! But be prepared to give a lot away, have good storage room or make sure you have plenty of freezer space for the cooked squash. We have only used one and had at least 3 meals from the one squash! As this is our first year for growing the Argonauts, we can't give personal long term experience but many sources say these will keep up to 8 months or more, stored indoors in a cool, dry place.



Tips to Making Gardening Easier

By: Nancy Hillin and Joan Orr, Somervell County Master Gardeners

Here is a great formula to clean salt deposits from your clay pots. Put equal parts of vinegar and rubbing alcohol into a spray bottle and apply it to the sides of your clay pots. Scrub with a plastic brush and your pots will take on a new look.



Small clay pots will work well as garden water hose guides. Here's how. Drive one foot of steel reinforcing rod into the ground at the corner of a garden or flower bed. Then, slip

two clay pots over the rod; the first one facing down and the other facing up. This trick will protect your beds by guiding the water hose around the beds and in the direction you need it to go.

Always have a measuring stick handy by marking your long-handled garden tools. Lay the tools you use most often on the ground and next to them lay down a tape measure. With a permanent ink pen, mark inches and feet on the tool handles. Now, when you are in the garden and need to space plants a certain distance apart you will have a handy

measuring device already in your hand.

To control aphids you can spray plants by using a strong blast of water from a garden hose or use insecticidal soap spray. But, here is a hands-on method you might try. Wrap a wide strip of tape around your hand with the sticky side out and pat the leaves infested with aphids. Concentrate on the underside of leaves, as that is their favorite spot to hide.



Who are Somervell County Master Gardeners?

By Nancy Hillin and Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardeners

Master Gardeners are volunteers sponsored by the AgriLIFE Extension Service who have chosen to help further the education and progress of horticulture within our community. To be a Master Gardener, a person must complete a minimum of 50 hours of horticultural training through the AgriLIFE Extension service and contribute 50 hours of volunteer service within a year. Maintaining the title is a bit easier: one must serve 12 hours of volunteer service and obtain six hours of continuing educational training each year through their local extension office.

Somervell County Master Gardeners thrive on the diversified talents of our membership. Some may prepare and deliver horticulture related programs to the public or designing and managing gardening projects for their communities. Others may perform computer related duties, creating and maintaining websites, writing articles and publishing newsletters related to

horticulture subjects. And others just like digging in the dirt! But we all share a passion for gardening.

Somervell County Master Gardener Association is the smallest fully-functioning Master Gardener Association in Texas with an active membership of 24. But our small size does not reflect the amount of effort we put in to our community and to the Texas Master Gardener Association as a whole. In fact, in April, 2011, the Somervell County Master Garden Association and the Lake Granbury Master Gardener Association will be co-hosting the Texas State Master Gardener Conference. It will be a three-day event with workshops, classes and well-known guest speakers associated with the gardening world.

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.

Individuals who have not attended the Master Gardeners Training Program may also become associate members of the SCMGA. Associate membership enables you to regularly attend our monthly meetings and be involved in some of the many aspects of the Master Gardener program. 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.

Master Gardeners are aware that our plant world can be fragile if we are not good stewards of all the wonderful living elements that support it. Although Mother Nature often sends challenging obstacles, Master Gardeners will always go to great lengths to meet those challenges by their willingness to help and beautify our environment.

Source: Texas Master Gardener Handbook

SCMGA Website has a New Look!

Submitted by Donna Hagar, Somervell County Master Gardener



It may not have been at our choosing, but with a server change mandated by our hosting servers from TAMU to use the WordPress platform, we have gotten a whole new look to our website. It is still a bit of a work in progress to get it set up exactly as we would like. But we are pleased with its clean lines and easy navigation. If you have specific requests of how we can improve it or what you'd like to see included, our ears are open!

Visit the site at the same address:

<http://somervellmastergardeners.org/>

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.

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

My Favorite Plant – The Hollyhock

By: Shirley Smith, Somervell County Master Gardener



There are approximately 60 species of hollyhock in the Mallow family. They are native to southwest and central Asia and are related to the hibiscus. This hardy plant will grow well in the wild. In fact, on a recent trip to Colorado, I saw them growing

alongside the roadside and in alleyways! It is classified as a perennial because it does come back every year. However, it is also considered a biennial since flowering can take place every other year.

Hollyhocks will do well in any sunny location that may be too hot and too dry for other plants. They can grow up to 9 feet tall! They produce multiple blooms on a central stem and come in a variety of colors: white, pink, purple or yellow. The most popular cultivar is *Alcea rosea*. There is an heirloom cultivar known as *Nigra* that is almost black.

The hollyhock does well in USDA zones 2-10 and is drought resistant (hmmm – could this do well in Somervell County????). An individual plant lives 2-3 years but because of all the

seeds it produces, a gardener can be assured of continuous plants.

There are 2 types of hollyhock plants: the true hollyhock is of the *Alcea* species, grows quite tall, has heart-shaped leaves and produces flowers of double blooms. The *Althea* species is recognized for its medicinal healing properties. It is the shortest of the 2 species, has round leaves and in some areas is known as the “marshmallow plant.”

The hollyhock was used by the ancient Greeks and Chinese for its medicinal properties to treat ailments such as indigestion, earache and toothache. Even the an-

cient Romans used the fruit and flowers of the *Althea* species in many of their culinary dishes. So, if you do not have this hardy flower growing in your garden maybe it is time to add it. Many of us remember this from having seen it in our grandmother's gardens.

Happy growing!

Source: gardenguides.com (About Hollyhocks)





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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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