

Williamson County Master Gardener Journal

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Dedicated to growing with Williamson County

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The President's Corner

Grace Bryce

.Hi Everyone,

It feels like spring has sprung with not much of a winter behind us. That being said, it is almost time for our 3rd Annual Spring Garden Fair. This event is our major fundraiser for WCMGA and will be from 9am to 2 pm on Saturday, March 31, 2012. This is a great opportunity to get several volunteer hours, whether it is from directing traffic, selling plants or helping at one of the booths. We need everyone's help to make this event a success. Our March monthly meeting, on March 12th, will be a planning meeting to wrap up loose ends instead of having a speaker. Plan to attend and see how you can help. Everyone can help by getting the word out with posters or flyers. More information about plants for sale and the speaker schedule will be updated at: <http://txmg.org/williamson/special-events>



I recently attended a directors' meeting at A & M for Texas Master Gardeners. A senior at A & M named Brady Grimes gave a presentation about an organic A & M student farm. I've included some information about the farm in this issue. It was a breath of fresh air to hear about the farm and what the students have done with it.

We have several Master Gardeners who have moved into our area and will be volunteering with us. Please welcome: Judy Currier from Harris County, Annie Bowersox from Aransas County, Steve Echols from Collin County, Cat McGrath-Farmer originally certified in Socorro, NM and moved here from Nevada, MO, and George Prall from Dallas County.

If you have been looking for volunteer opportunities, why not write something for the newsletter? It can be as simple as submitting a recipe or writing about your favorite plant or something more detailed if you like. I also need some help managing our virtual Help Desk. It isn't difficult; training is provided and you can do it from home.

The Texas Master Gardener State Meeting is coming up May 3rd, 4th, & 5th and will be in San Antonio this year. If you haven't already registered, please go to: <http://www.bexarcountymastergardeners.org/>

Registration can be done online. This conference will have great workshops for educational hours and tours. It will probably be fun too....just sayin'.

If I've forgotten anything here, I'm sure it will find its way into an email.

Happy Spring!

Grace

Taxonomy Classes for 2012

Flo Oxley will be leading a monthly two hour Taxonomy Class from 10 a.m.—12 p.m. from March through October at the Georgetown Public Library for those interested in learning more about plants in our area. The class dates are: March 24th, April 21st, May 19th, June 16th, July 21st, August 18th, September 15th and October 20th. The cost is \$10 per class, and you will need to reserve a seat if you wish to attend. The class is open to all Native Plant Society members as well as Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists. Reservations need to be emailed to Janet Church at churchjanet362@gmail.com. Coffee and cookies will be provided.

Manfreda Macho Mocha

Janet White

Mangave Macho Mocha or *Manfreda Macho Mocha* sounds more like a sensuous drink from the coffee shop than a dramatic agave hybrid. The beautiful specimen began on a plant exploration near Monterrey, Mexico. Carl Schoenfeld of Yucca Do Nursery collected the seed from a *manfreda variegata* (Texas Tuberose) planted near an *agave celsii*. This fabulous, colorful drought tolerant/cold tolerant plant evolved.

An awesome essential for your drought tolerant garden can also grow well in a container. The plant is rosette shaped and will grow 4 to 6 feet wide and 2 to 3 feet tall. The spring time blooms appear as a thick reddish stalk with white blossoms from the center of the plant similar to an agave. Hummingbirds are in heaven here! Soon new rosettes emerge at the base of the main plant. Thick, fleshy leaves colored blue gray are spotted maroon which gives you year around color, and though there are points along the leaf there are no sharp spines on this succulent.

The plant will tolerate sun to part shade; it enjoys a little of both, but I would protect it against the full, summer sun. Watering needs are quite low, and it is reported that the plant will survive temps as low as 10 degrees in zone 8. Good drainage is essential.



Gardening Tips for Early Spring

Winola VanArtsdalen

February

What wonderful rain we have had to start the new year! Especially in winter, it is best to leave a sprinkler system turned off so as not to overwater, and only turn it on when we have not had an inch to an inch and a half of rain in the past few weeks. You can water annuals and containers, as needed, but do not waste water on a whole yard when it is not needed. Do water well before a freeze.

Any time of year, wounds on oak trees must be painted, but February through June is the most dangerous time to prune oaks, as beetles are more active in mild weather. Prevention is the key to stop this lethal disease and we must have emblazoned in our brains:

Paint all wounds on oak trees any size, any season, immediately!

Landscape: Remember that gardening success begins with good soil preparation and continues with the choice of right plant for right place and careful monitoring. To amend soil, it should be moist, but not so wet that it sticks to spade. Add compost before mulch in spring and fall and also add manure/compost between plantings. It is best to do so a couple of weeks before planting to give the microbes time to work. Compost can be cotton burr compost, which adds acidity, homemade compost and/or manure. Compost will help with drainage, but if you need even more, add some mineral sands, i.e. granite sand, or expanded shale.

Continue your garden planning. Choose plants carefully for sun/shade requirements and group plants according to water needs. Try mixing some herbs and vegetables in your flower beds. Many will add color (i.e. Swiss chard) and/or texture (i.e. Artemisia 'powis castle.'). If you are prepared to cover during a freeze, you can begin some planting now, especially groundcovers in bare spots, herbs and hardy perennials. Plant warm season bulbs, coreopsis, cosmos, Echinacea, and salvia in late February. It is too early for marigolds, zinnias and periwinkle.

Maintenance:

Ornamental grasses and crepe myrtles should be cut back now. Advice is often given to trim roses on Valentine's Day. The problem with that advice is that the same advice is given in the Gulf area and Central Texas, with our spring several weeks later than the former. Watch the weather when making your decision, but I prefer at least late February.

Continue fertilizing winter annuals.

Lawn: Put out pre-emergent by February 15. If you scalp your lawn, do so after the last freeze. Plan to add 1/2" compost/top dressing before or after aerating. Do not fertilize lawn until after two mowings, or you will only be feeding the weeds. Texas Agri-life Extension recommends fertilizing hybrid Bermuda grass and St. Augustine grass late March to April 1 and Buffalo and Zoysia in late April to early May with 1-0-0 ratio fertilizer at a rate of 1.0 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. (using a slow release source of nitrogen). This would be equivalent to 5 pounds of 21-0-0 or 7 pounds of 15-0-0 per 1,000 sq. ft. Water the lawn thoroughly after applying fertilizer.

March

Landscape: Plan to convert an area to groundcover. Think beyond rock, which reflects heat, to drought tolerant plants that give you the best of both worlds: low water demand while their transpiration improves the climate. Remember that plants also have therapeutic value. Research has proven that people actually heal better when exposed to nature. Do we want to live surrounded by only hot, sun-reflecting rock? I think not!

Planting: Remember that your success in gardening depends upon first, the soil and then the right plant in the right place. Be sure to add organics such as compost (homemade, cotton burr compost, Dillo dirt, manure, etc.) spring and fall. If not that often, at least add organics between plantings. Soil rich in compost will not only help the plant absorb more nutrients, but it will hold moisture longer and require less water while being much easier to dig.

Now is the time to plant groundcovers and borders. To attract hummingbirds, plant four o'clocks, cypress vines, and perennial salvia. I have never known deer to eat salvia, and they are extremely drought tolerant. There are varieties for sun or part shade. You just cannot have enough salvias in our area!

Plant half-hardy plants now, but do not plant heat-loving plants such as basil, peppers, and periwinkle.

Divide iris, if needed. To re-energize your bulbs for next year, leave foliage on after the blooms die.

Maintenance: Ready, set, go! The race is on to finish your late winter/early spring trimming in time to avoid cutting off new spring growth. The plants put out much energy to produce those green shoots to provide food for the plant through photosynthesis. If you cut off that new growth, this adds stress to the plant, and stress weakens their disease resistance.

Trimming shrubs: First, cut out deadwood and branches crossing/rubbing to see what you have. Then, consider needed thinning/shaping. Trim for a purpose. Trim spring blooming shrubs i.e. bridal wreath, lorapetalum, viburnum, etc. after spring bloom.

Trimming Oaks: Remember that the worst time to trim oak trees is between January and July when the beetles are most active, but there is no safe time. To avoid the spread of oak wilt, you must paint all wounds on oak trees immediately, any time, any size, any season! If you hire the

work done, be sure this is specified in the contract and that you watch them!

Lawn Care:

You can scalp and aerate lawn after the last frost.

You can topdress lawns with compost any time of year, but mid-summer. Do it now to help save water in the summer.

If you topdress, there should be enough nitrogen in the topdressing that you do not need early spring fertilizer.

Want to change some lawn to grasses? Now is the time to plant warm season grasses such as Indian grass, little bluestem, switchgrass and Gulf Coast muhly.

Questions: Contact Winola VanArtsdalen, Williamson County Master Gardener, jimwin@verizon.net or Agri-life: <http://williamson-tx.tamu.edu> Phone 512-943-3300.

Howdy Farm ~ Organics at A & M

Grace Bryce

The University of A & M now has a Sustainable Agriculture Student Association. Students at A & M wanted to learn about a more sustainable way to grow and raise food. This association has established a learning community and has created educational opportunities for people interested in sustainable agriculture. Dr. Joe Novak has been advising the student farm since its inception. Graduate students and undergraduate students run the association and manage the farm.

This working organic farm is located on 5 acres at the College Station campus and will soon expand to 18 acres. It provides a hands-on enhancement for many of the horticultural classes as well as experience with the marketing aspects of farming. Apprenticeship programs are also available to students. The farm is operated by over 300 student volunteers and operates as a CSA, community sustainable agriculture, which sell shares and pays the investors with fresh produce.

The farm has been so successful that it supplies campus dining services with fresh vegetables and sells even more at different Farmers Market venues. Livestock waste that the university would otherwise pay to have hauled away, is now being composted and used in the organic farm.

The students recognize the need for more research in organic farming and several research projects are underway. Some of the research is currently being done on composting, aquaculture and aquaponics, using live fish to supply the plants with the nutrients they need. They plan to continue adding research projects as they go. It was refreshing to hear what the next generation is doing at A & M. Will they still bleed maroon if they go green?

To find out more about the Howdy Farm, visit: <http://studentfarm.tamu.edu>
They are also on Facebook: TAMU Howdy! Farm



Rest in Peace
J.J. the Donkey
 2005-2/4/2012



Berry Springs lost one of its beloved Park Mascots, J.J. the Donkey. J.J. left us on Saturday, February 4 due to natural causes. The park known to some of the young patrons as "The Donkey Park" will miss his greeting you at the fence eager to be petted and hopefully receive a carrot from many who looked forward to seeing him on their visit. His buddy Poco will especially miss him. They were first cousins. At first Poco treated J.J. as an outsider when he arrived with his Mom and J.J.'s aunt Jenny, but when Jenny went home and Poco and J.J. remained, Poco quickly learned to love and respect his gentle running buddy. Many a day they were seen chasing each other around the compound like little kids playing a game of tag, sharing a snack on their hay bale and always side by side greeting visitors to enjoy their company as two of the treasures of the park. He will be forever in our hearts and memories.

We will be adopting a new buddy for Poco soon. We have already located him and are in the process of getting him vaccinated before he is relocated. We would like input from folks in naming him. He is just over a year old and looks just like Poco and JJ did when they first came to live at the park.

Susan Blackledge

Monthly Meetings

Williamson County Master Gardeners hold monthly meetings at the Williamson County Extension Office, 3151 SE Innerloop Road, Suite A, Georgetown on the second Monday of each month at 6:30pm. Master Gardeners and the public are welcome to attend.

In the Demo Garden

Chuck McKelley

Even though the winter months are usually the time when gardeners kick back reading seed catalogs and planning what to plant in the spring, the vegetable demonstration garden team has been hard at work for the last month or so. Several of the raised beds were planted with winter garden crops last fall, so we have been feeding and watering those plants as well as pulling those few stubborn weeds that haven't realized that it's winter time. All that work has resulted in a terrific crop of winter veggies.



Winter is a good time to do maintenance in the garden, so we have been busy pruning the blackberries and making sure that the irrigation system is working properly. We have also repaired several breaks in the raised beds.

We've had a mild winter so far but there have been a few cold nights. Most winter veggies don't mind the cold, but some of the mesclun mixes contain greens that are affected by cold temperatures and some small seedlings can dry out from the winter winds. So we have erected frameworks of PVC to support row cover for those especially cold nights.

Every year we try to rotate crops between the beds and sometimes that involves moving perennial veggies to new homes. Winter is a good time to transplant hardy plants so we have moved some globe artichokes that were crowding one of the raised beds to a place where they can sprawl without overwhelming the other plants.

These cool winter days are also a good time to put in root crops so we have planted onions and potatoes in the row garden. Our intention is to produce enough of them that we can donate some to local food banks in the spring.



In the circular bed that held pole beans last year we have planted sugar snap peas. The picture above shows a couple of members of the team installing a trellis to support the peas. After the trellis was in place we transplanted strawberries from one of the raised beds into the center of the pea bed. This is a good example of one type of companion planting. The peas are climbing vines that will grow vertically on the trellis while the strawberry plants will stay low to the ground and self-propagate by sending runners out horizontally over the inside of the circle.

This is the time of year when the veggie team prepares the beds that have lain fallow during the last few months so that they will be ready for late spring and early summer crops. To that end we recently added compost and agricultural molasses to those beds. The compost will add nutrients and organic matter to hold water and the molasses will feed the microbes that break the nutrients down and make them available to the plants.

We are currently planting early spring veggies like lettuce, chard, turnips and onions in some of the raised beds so that they will be at their prime for the garden fair at the end of March. In early March we will plant some late spring vegetables and herbs in the remaining raised beds. The row cover will definitely be needed for the late spring veggies because the average date of last frost in our area is at the beginning of March and we could see frost for a couple of weeks after that.



There are usually master gardeners in the demo garden from 10:00 AM to noon Tuesdays and Fridays, if the weather permits and there is something that needs to be done on those days. The garden, which is on the north side of the Williamson County Extension Office at 3151 SE Innerloop Road in Georgetown, is open to the public. Anyone is welcome to stop by to check out the garden or to ask gardening questions of the veggie garden team.

Newsletter Submissions

Thank you to those Master Gardeners who submitted articles, pictures, and ideas for this newsletter issue. If you would like to contribute to the *Williamson County Master Gardener Journal*, please send your submissions to Jane Williamson at jawilliamson516@yahoo.com by the 25th of the month. As you garden, volunteer and learn, take a moment to share with other gardeners.

The Kew Royal Botanical Gardens Part 1: The Palm House

Valerie Clark

The [Kew Royal Botanical Gardens](#) near London is one of the world's premier horticulture sites. Truly considered the gardener's "Mecca", some highlights that draw nearly two million people a year to the Kew include:

- The living collections include more than 30,000 different kinds of plants.
- Buildings that include a Palace for a Royal Family, a Queen's Cottage and a Museum.
- Internationally-recognized Azalea, Grass and Rose gardens.
- A Greenhouse that has year round blooming orchid exhibits and a carnivorous plants collection.
- An authentic Japanese Minka House and Bamboo Garden.
- Xstrata Treetop Walkway that gives you the view only birds usually experience.
- A Victorian Greenhouse that has over 36,000 square feet with palms and cycads from all over the world.
- A Giant Pagoda and Chinese Gardens



The Kew was one of the highlights of my trip in December 2012. While it deserves many days to view in detail, you eventually have to decide what is most important in the time that you have. There's a lot to choose from in the [350 acre facility](#), including densely-populated greenhouses and extensive gardens.

When going from place to place, you may find yourself easily distracted with various "eye-candy" and fascinating plants begging to be admired and have its sign read. In my humble opinion, only a horse wearing blinders would not be distracted when walking in the Kew. Robert Burns said so eloquently what was going to happen to me, "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley."



And then you have the Garden art... and at the Kew this is not your normal art. Gardeners, who by their very nature love art, could not help but stop and admire a sculpture like this one of an over 8' huge Hercules wrestling a large, angry serpent (the Greek God Achelous) on top of a large square base.

One of the main attractions at Kew is the Palm House, a massive Victorian Greenhouse (iron and glass) that has over 36,000 square feet and over 700 panes of glass... with palms and cycads from all over the world. Originally built in the 1840s, this architectural wonder influenced large greenhouse construction worldwide.



In the 1840's when the sun never set on the British Empire, large and beautiful palms were coming to England from Africa, the Indian Ocean islands, the Americas, Asia, Australasia and the Pacific Islands. These palms needed a home. The architect Decimus Burton borrowed technology from ship builders and designed what is essentially an upside down ship's hull. In case you are wondering about Decimus strange name, he was his parent's tenth child and his name reflects it. Richard Turner, the builder, was a manufacturer of glasshouses and a pioneer in the structural use of wrought iron. Decimus Burton and Richard Turner created a structure that was not only capable of housing the large palms but would become the architectural icon for the Kew.

The entrance to The Palm House is guarded by two large lions that are really quite recent; they only arrived in the 1950's. Your first reaction inside the Palm House may be that Texas is not so humid after all. Looking up you will see the high steam jets that will keep the palms and cycads flourishing. Plants from Africa and the Indian Ocean area are in the South wing, while the Asia, Australasian and the Pacific share the North Wing.

The Americas have the central section and the tallest palms from all areas are located beneath the 19m high central dome. The tallest palm trees crowns are just too high to really view. Not a problem, just go up to the 25' walkway around the central dome and have closer look. Some of the palms that you can view there include the peach palm from Central and South America, the babassu from Brazil, the queen palm from South America and the coconut palm from the Pacific.

Some of the palms that attract the most attention:

- The African oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) has the highest yield of all tropical oil-producing plants. This oil is used in margarine, ice-cream, coffee whitener, other food products, soaps, lubricants and candles.
- The *Calamus longipinna* found New Guinea is a member of the climbing palms known as **rattans**. Rattan is used to make everything from cane furniture, to fishing traps and sleeping mats.
- Pictured right, the Betel nut palm (*Areca catechu*) cultivated throughout Asia for the endosperm of its seeds which are chewed in India and South-East Asia as a narcotic and masticatory.



The Palm House is also known for its cycads, ‘living fossils’ that have remained unchanged for millions of years. Fossil records reveal that these plants flourished some 280-135 million years ago and likely represent a link in the evolution from ferns to flowering plants. In decline since the flowering plants became dominant, about 100 million years ago, these are now rare species.

This cycad is one of the oldest pot plants in the world, *Encephalartos altensteinii* in the Palm House, and is at least 228 years old.



While in the Palm House, I met Catherine Cowen and Cathy Champion sitting in front of a table with a display of grooming aids and cosmetics. It looked like some sort of educational display so this retired teacher just had to go and ask questions. Each of the beauty products were placed on top of a picture of the plant that was in used in them. These volunteers were preparing for student tours, to show that plants were not only vital as a source of food but also essential ingredients in medicine, cosmetics, and other commercial uses. Catherine and Cathy are among over 450 volunteers at the Kew, who play an important part in the operation of the facility as guides, docents, workers and assistants.

Just as inspiring as the gardens themselves, the Kew Gift Shop is a great place to buy something to bring home or to friends. You can spend hours browsing through their world-famous selection of **botanical prints** (also available through their online images store). Their bookroom provides an extensive collection of scientific and art books on all sorts of horticulture topics.

In addition to the Kew facility that you can come visit, it also has a significant role in science and history. Since 2003, the Kew serves as a World Heritage Site with over 250 years of history. They promote and conduct research on plant conservation worldwide. They maintain various collections, catalogues, and databases. Their nearby Wakehurst facility hosts the storage and cataloging for the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership. More about the Seed Project in an upcoming article!

Spring Gardening “Texas Style”

The Williamson County Master Gardener's and the Texas AgriLIFE Extension Office were proud to host Patty Leander for "Spring Gardening, Texas Style!" on January 28 at the Georgetown Public Library. Patty shared her experiences, knowledge and photographs from her own garden. She covered a variety of topics including healthy soil, pest control, harvesting and even tips for preparation. Patty is a contributing writer to Texas Gardener Magazine and has a B.S. degree in Food and Nutrition.



Patty answered gardening questions after the program.

Put the Burn Ban On Burn-Out, With Healthy Stress Management

Grace Bryce

Dealing with stress can be a challenge for most people. Not dealing with it in a healthy manner can lead to serious health conditions. Putting all of your energy into a project and becoming consumed by it can lead to being stressed-out and eventually can lead to burn-out. Having a more balanced lifestyle can assist with reducing stress. Improving skills for handling the stress is another angle to “reduce” stress. Burn-out can happen in a demanding job, but can also happen in a volunteer setting. We can be so demanding on ourselves that we lose sight of our balance in life.

Health Dangers

A healthy immune system recognizes abnormal cells and kills them before they produce cancer. Stress can weaken the immune system. Stress may also be linked to cancer, because when people are under pressure they tend to start smoking, stop exercising, or start eating unhealthy foods, which can lead to cancer. How people handle stress is a more important consideration than the stress itself. (1) ‘Burning the midnight oil’ on a regular basis can affect the adrenal glands. The adrenal

glands are two small glands which sit on top of the kidneys. They communicate with all of the hormones to tell them what to do. They produce the stress hormones including adrenaline and cortisol, which are released to help the body cope with stress. If we are living a balanced life, adrenaline is released when we need that surge of energy, for the fight or flight reaction. Afterward, we return to a calmer state. When we become “adrenaline junkies” we crave that high energy state at all times. This can be addictive and dangerous to our health. (2) Staying up late enough to get a second wind, means the adrenal glands have released extra cortisol to give the body a boost of energy. Once this happens, it may be difficult to get to sleep, even after finishing the task at hand and even though we are tired. The next day begins with exhaustion, and caffeine or other stimulants may be used to stimulate and give the body more “energy”. This begins a vicious cycle, along with other stressors that can lead to adrenal exhaustion. Adrenal exhaustion is characterized by constant fatigue that is not relieved by sleep or resting. True adrenal exhaustion will take years of recovery time to eliminate toxins, rebuild nutritional deficiencies, and make a shift in lifestyle changes. (3)

Prevention & Stress Management Tools

Prevention of burn-out, in general, is the best medicine. Recognizing early signs of the toll taken on the body and the mind and making some changes preemptively can make a huge difference. Balance your life across the seven vital areas of health, family, financial, intellectual, social, professional and spiritual. Do it by becoming organized. It takes more time to be disorganized than it does to be organized. Being organized allows for completing more work in less time and with less effort.

(4) In Stephen Covey’s book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, he explains the difference between proactive people and reactive people. Highly proactive people recognize the responsibility to choose their responses. These people do not blame circumstances, conditioning or conditions for their behavior. Their behavior stems from their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than from their conditions, which are based on feeling. We really do have more control over our lives and it starts with the way we see things and recognizing that we have choices. Stop using reactive language such as, “I can’t...”, “I have to...” and “If only...”. The seven habits, plus the new eighth habit, outline a plan to organize and set priorities, put first things first, learn to say “no”, learn to delegate and put time to balanced good use. (5) Making a plan is the first step to making healthier changes. Gather information and create a personal stress management tool box.

Take care of emotional health. Negative emotions can be signals that something needs to change. They may be triggered from an event or from thoughts surrounding an event. How we interpret what happened can alter how we experience the event and whether or not it causes stress. If the problem can be seen, then there is an opportunity to make a change. (6)

- Change what can be changed for the better.
- Make changes that reduce frustration and find an outlet such as exercise or meditation.
- Get a hobby, like gardening, remember?
- Find something to laugh about each day.
- Learn to change your perspective.
- Choose to flow with it and be calm.
- Avoid toxic relationships.
- Learn forgiveness, it is for the benefit of the forgiver, not the benefit of the forgiven. Forgiveness is good for your health in many ways.
- Smile and be nice to people anyway.
- Remember what you enjoy doing and make time for doing it.
- Schedule time wisely and balance it with spontaneity.

Another tool to manage stress, whether it is emotional stress or not, is the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) developed by Gary Craig. EFT changes the body’s stress response by balancing disrupted energy in the meridian system. The protocol uses tapping on certain meridians to balance the system. It has been used to remove negative emotions, reduce food cravings, reduce or eliminate pain, and to implement positive goals. (7)

Take care of the mind, body, and spirit; they are all connected. Yoga is a good choice and covers all three. Make time for daily meditation and relaxation. Just twenty minutes of meditation per day can improve health. A recent study showed that meditation improved both emotional and physical responses to stress. People who meditated regularly for six weeks had less activation of their immune systems and less emotional distress, when put in a stressful situation. (8) Some more tools for stress management are deep breathing, imagery, and mindfulness. Breathing from your abdomen instead of your chest will supply more oxygen to your bloodstream and can help with staying calm. Imagery is simply creating a mental image that can help relax and soothe. Imagine mom's apple pie, walking on the beach, or sitting in your garden. Mindfulness is focusing on the present moment. Don't let the past or future get in the way of the present. Savor the present moment. (1)

Harvey Diamond, in his book, *Fit For Life, A New Beginning*, outlines seven distinct stages of disease, with cancer developing in the seventh stage. Heeding the warning signs during the first six stages and removing the cause of the problem, will stop the pain and disease process and return the body to health. He details a process of using an alkaline diet to cleanse the body regularly to maintain health and to also cleanse the mind of emotional baggage. (9) Regular exercise, eating healthier food and improving nutrition to restore and maintain a healthy body will help with stress management. Avoiding alcohol, sugar, unhealthy foods and environmental toxins will reduce stress on the body. (3) Massage therapy and acupuncture can also be helpful in the release of stress build up. Go to bed earlier instead of staying up later, cut out caffeine and drink half an ounce of water per pound of body weight per day. Eating 30 - 40 grams of fiber per day will help move toxins out and may help lower your cholesterol in the process. Take Vitamin C and a good B Complex to help the body deal with stress. There are many tools for stress management and making healthy changes in your life. So, put the burn-ban on burn-out. Put your personal stress management tool-box together and learn to chill out. Don't worry, be happy, is still good advice.

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Row Cover in the Garden

Chuck McKelley

A freeze one night and 80-degree temperatures two days later. Mild winters that would make insects grin if they could do that. Our central Texas weather presents many challenges for gardeners, but we do have a few tools in our kit to help us survive the weather and the creepy-crawlies. One of the best tools is row cover.

Row cover is that white cloth that you may see covering plants in some commercial nurseries. It comes in at least three weights: light-weight, heavy-weight and all purpose weight. Row cover is available by the yard from rolls in six-foot and twelve-foot widths or it can be obtained pre-cut to several lengths, again usually in six- or twelve-foot widths. It can be purchased at home improvement stores, nurseries or via the Internet.

Regardless of the weight, row cover is designed to allow light and water to penetrate to the plants under cover. Heavy-weight and all purpose weight row cover are used to cover tender plants in order to protect them from the cold. Light-weight and all purpose weight row cover can be used to keep insects from attacking plants without using organic or inorganic insecticides. Light-weight row cover is also useful as a substitute for mulch when planting very small seeds such as carrots that might be buried too deep if conventional mulch was applied.

When row cover is used as a substitute for mulch, it is placed directly on the ground over the seeds and held in place with landscape staples or bricks, boards or other heavy objects. More often, however, row cover is to cover rows of plants, either in the ground or in raised beds. In that case it is mounted on frames, usually constructed from PVC. We have probably all seen long, Quonset hut-shaped lines of row covers mounted over arcs of PVC, although we may not have realized what was used for the support. Here is a photo of the PVC supports for row cover in some of the rectangular raised beds in the vegetable demonstration garden.



Row cover is quite versatile and can be used to cover square beds such as those in the photo.



You can even use row cover to protect plants in containers such as those in this photo.

It is most common to use 3/4-inch PVC to make row cover frames but smaller diameter PVC works better if the bed or container is narrow because it will bend in a smaller diameter arc than the larger size. The easiest way to mount the PVC in a bed is to put a piece of rebar in the ground and put the PVC over it. Here is a picture with the PVC pulled up to reveal the rebar that anchors it.



The row cover must be fastened to the PVC frame and/or the ground in some way. There are special fasteners made for this purpose. Here is a picture of a clip made to attach row cover to 3/4-inch PVC.

When row cover is used to cover a rectangular bed, the ends must be secured. The photo shows a special pin that has a small coil in the top. Row cover is wound into the coil and the pin is inserted in the ground. This allows the row cover to be anchored without damaging the cover material.

While these types of fasteners are convenient, they are often hard to find and relatively expensive. There are many other ways to fasten row cover that are less costly. Any device or material that serves the purpose can be used. If you have heavy boards, bricks or similar material, they can be used to hold down the edge of the row cover. Landscape staples can also be used to pin down the edges of the fabric. However, they will punch holes in it. An inexpensive way to fasten the cover to the frame, regardless of the diameter of the PVC, is to use spring-loaded clothes pins, which are often available at dollar stores. If the row cover is being used to protect plants in a container, you can hold it in place with the twist ties that can be purchased from home improvement store or dollar stores in rolls.



If you haven't used row cover before, give it a try. You will find it a versatile tool in your battle against the central Texas elements.



Berry Springs Spring Clean Up/Noon Pot Luck Luncheon

8a.m. Sat. Mar. 10th until 3p.m. (Rain Date Sat. Mar.17th)

It is that time again to come out and spruce up the Park for the Season. We will gather at the Tonkawa (Large) Pavilion on the top of the hill across from the restrooms.

Please bring with you work gloves, hand pruning tool, weeding tool, loppers and a water bottle. You may not need all of these tools, it will depend on your work assignment. If you have worked this event either in the Spring or the Fall and have a preference as to where you would like to work or if you would like to be a leader, **let us know!** We will be cleaning out the beds, trimming back dead vegetation and mulching along with other miscellaneous chores. **RSVP!!!! to Susan Blackledge at sblackledge@wilco.org or call Park Phone, 512-930-0040.** This is very important so we are well organized and have what we need on site.

The Pot Luck Luncheon will begin at Noon and will be coordinated by Elizabeth Grieder elizabeth.grieder@earthlink.net and Marlyn Hooper pmhooper@suddenlink.net or you can call the **Park Phone 512-930-0040**. Please touch base with one of these contacts to let us know what dish/snack you wish to contribute. This helps to have a good variety of goodies. The pavilion does have electricity if needed for your dish. You can bring a breakfast snack instead of a lunch item if you prefer.

Donations of native plants/shrubs/seeds are always appreciated. The park is located at 1801 C.R. 152, Georgetown. This is always a great social event, and we do get a lot of work done with less effort. Come & enjoy the camaraderie and a Great Lunch!

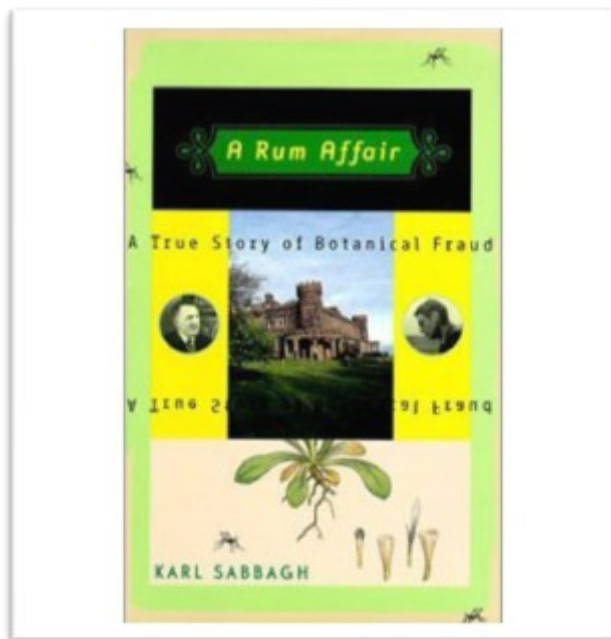


Book Review

Claire Hall

A Rum Affair

by Karl Sabbagh



I first heard mention of this book at a class Flo Oxley taught on taxonomy a while back. She'd heard about it from some Master Naturalists and said it was a great read, so checked it out. She was right!

It's all about a British botanist named John Heslop Harrison who gained notoriety in the early 1900s as an expert on sedges, grasses and ferns on the islands off the coast of Scotland. Much of the action centers on the Isle of Rum (formerly Rhum), one of the Inner Hebrides. Harrison had gained a reputation as a brilliant collector, educator and writer when he "discovered" *Carex bicolor* and other rare grasses growing on Rum. Or did he? That is the question author Sabbagh investigates in this book.

Sabbagh describes good botanists as being, "... interested to the point of obsession in tiny details of plant anatomy and physiology; they will sacrifice time, money, and comfort to seek out a plant they have never seen before, or a familiar plant in an unfamiliar location. ..." Told through the eyes of a botanist, this could have been a very dull book indeed.

But Sabbagh presents the case against Harrison in an engaging and entertaining way. Harrison's primary critic John Raven was Cambridge-educated but not a professional botanist. He investigated Harrison's work, visited Rum and, in 1954, wrote a report against the claim. For a number of reasons, including Raven's wish not to embarrass Harrison, the report was never published. Sabbagh's book lays out the controversy and leads the reader to an objective conclusion.

But the book is a pearl for other reasons as well. It provides a look into twentieth century social, economic and educational divides in the world of academia in England. And, since much of the "action" takes place during World War II, we're shown how the bombing in London affected even the world of botany.

Give this book a try. You won't be disappointed.

Williamson County Master Gardener Officers for 2012

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