NOTICE
MG Association Meeting
Rose Garden Center
December 6th
Christmas Luncheon

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December Luncheon
The December 6th MG meeting is the annual Christmas luncheon. The Smith County MG Association is providing the meat dishes, cooked by the Woman’s Building ladies. Members will provide the rest. Please plan to bring a salad, casserole or dessert and a spoon or other appropriate serving utensil.

Members and spouses should have already made reservations with John Brasher.

Volunteer Hours Reports
We are very nearly at year-end which means we would like to have everyone’s report of volunteer hours current and up-to-date. Many of you have faithfully reported each month and we appreciate that. For those of you who have not been so faithful, now is the time to get all of your reports together and turned in.

Each of us who wishes to continue as an active Master Gardener must complete at least the minimum requirements each year, but without your report you cannot be recertified.

Your report should always be made at month-end, but this time there is a deadline for any report for 2007. Your report should be turned in by January 15, 2008. Drop your reports off at the office or send them to Martin Davis via e-mail or regular mail.

Smith County Association Dues
Dues for the association are just $12 per year and are due January 1, 2008. You can make your Treasurer’s day by remitting your dues early. The easy way to do that is to bring a check with you to the December meeting, made out to SCMG and give it to Susan Holloway. Checks can be mailed to her at 3110 Belmead Lane, Tyler, TX 75701.

National EarthKind Rose Trial
Following his return from National EarthKind Specialist training in late September Bob Shearer shared some of his experiences with Keith Hansen. Keith suggested that Bob might be interested in heading up the EarthKind rose trial project that had been started earlier this year in Tyler. At that time the location of the beds had been determined and the area had been sprayed to kill the grass and weeds, but nothing further had been done. The trial beds are located in Lindsey Park on the west side of Tyler.

Bob accepted the job and began to put together his plan. During October meetings were held with the principal suppliers (of roses, compost and mulch) and plans were made with the City of Tyler Parks department to understand their participation.

On November 5th the Tyler Rose Garden crew tilled the beds and only two weeks later the roses had been planted and mulched. All that remains is to complete the engraved plant signs and get them in place.

With Bob Shearer’s guidance, the plans and execution of them were carried out quickly and with great concern for doing them ‘by the book’. The National EarthKind trial gardens must each have 30 varieties of roses, with 3 specimens of each. Many, but not all, of the rose varieties in the trial are Griffith Buck (a deceased breeder from Iowa) roses whose program goal was to create cold hardy and disease resistant roses. The trial is national in scope for not only disease resistance, but also cold hardiness (not an issue here). The others are available in commerce and/or are current EarthKind roses in Texas.

See Earthkind page 3

Texas Cooperative Extension
Mission
“Providing quality, relevant outreach and continuing educational programs and services to the people of Texas.”

Extension Office
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As the Thanksgiving holiday passes, I’m reminded of all the things to be thankful for. Most recently, I’m thankful for the 2+ inches of rainfall our region received over the weekend. It has been very dry since July, and we continue to see problems with older trees and shrubs struggling with the vagaries of nature as the pendulum swings from too little, to too much, back to too little rain. The slow, steady nature of this recent rain was ideal for soaking deep into the soil without runoff. Every good Master Gardener should have a rain gauge whereby you can keep track of rainfall received at your place. Don’t be lulled into complacency, thinking that with cooler weather you will not need to water the lawn and garden. If we get timely and sufficient rains, you can put the hose away. BUT, if we do not receive periodic soaking rains, then be ready to supplement every few weeks to prevent stress on trees and shrubs. I’m also thankful for all our volunteers involved in so many worthwhile projects, making a difference in the lives of youth and adults. I particularly want to thank Bob Shearer and Craig Reiland for coordinating the new Earth Kind Rose Trial that was installed at Lindsey Park in November. Bob took the ball and ran with it, making sure everything was done according to specifications. Many thanks to Ronny Duncan, John LeBleu, Gary Graham, J. D. Wood, Jim Showen, Harvey Collen, Tamara Listiak and Bob for their hard work planting 90 roses and spreading the mulch over the whole site. And also thanks to Craig’s Rose Garden staff for their work in preparing the site and working right along side Master Gardeners. The Rose Garden staff also always provides welcome assistance to the IDEA Garden and Heritage Garden projects when requested.

The EarthKind (EK) Rose Trial is significant in several ways. It provides a replicated study that will statistically analyze the performance of 30 varieties of roses under a minimal maintenance regime. Besides regular watering to get them established, these roses will receive no fertilizer and no pesticide applications for the duration of the study. A finished compost was tilled into the soil, and a mixed hardwood shredded mulch applied (which will need to be replenished as it breaks down). The study is significant in that the Lindsey Park site is composed of fine sand. Other EK Rose Trials have been established on heavier-textured (clay) soils which have a higher starting nutrient content and ability to hold nutrients and water than does sandy soil. The theory is that the finished compost along with the breakdown of mixed hardwood mulch will supply sufficient nutrients to maintain a healthy plants. This had been shown to be true in clay soils, but this if the first time it has been tested in sands. This is a trial, so it will be interesting to see over the next few years how well the roses hold up!

To learn more about the Earth Kind program, go to the Earthkind.tamu.edu web site. While there, take one or more of the EK Online Training Modules and earn 1 CE per module (up to 3 per year). Also, consider taking the EK Challenge while visiting the site.

We are still in need of Tip of the Week articles!! Write about a favorite plant, planting technique, gardening gizmo, landscape, vegetable, fruit, or other subject. You will get Volunteer hours and CE’s for each tip you write.

**Farewells**

Earlier this month one of the members of the first MG class passed away suddenly. Paul Ferguson was a very active participant in the early years of the program. His home garden on Old Bullard Road was a plethora of horticultural variety, not the least of which was a Japanese maple, with an unknown heritage, whose leaves turn “traffic stopping” orange each December. Several seedlings from that tree exist in other MG gardens since Paul passed them along. Thanks Paul, we will miss you.

After a year of continuous health problems, Frieda Colfelt’s husband William passed away on November 22nd. He was well known for his garden and if it had not been for his poor health we (the SCMGs) would have visited their home following a Master Gardener meeting. Frieda was a member of Class 12 and has been inactive this year due to her husband’s health problems. She plans to return as a participant in 2008.

In her note entitled “Aloha Ladies”, Joyce Gay wrote, “I am sorry to have to tell you that I will be unable to meet my commitment to speak on Plant Propagation as I promised last summer. I have moved back to Hawaii and the commute would be a bit too much. I miss all the Master Gardeners in Smith county, but have signed up for the classes here starting in February.” In the meantime, her husband David Gay remains here in Texas as he attempts to sell their house in Gladewater. Joyce tells us that they bought 3 acres on the Big Island and she is clearing one acre for gardening. She says, “Pass this along to other MG’s so that if they are headed this way, I would love visitors.” Joyce Gay
It’s hard to believe that it’s Christmas time again. I remember being a child and thinking that each day was at least a year long and that Christmas would never arrive. Now the time speeds by so fast that it seems like I’ve just finished one year’s batch of Christmas cards and it’s time to start writing them again.

I hope you have all sent your RSVP to John Brasher for the Christmas luncheon on December 6th. As all the veteran Master Gardeners know, it will be a treat for all of our taste buds and a fun way to start off the holiday season. While you’re there, take a moment to give Susan Holloway a check for your 2008 association dues. All members (Interns included) need to pay our annual dues of $12.00 for the coming year. And while I’m talking about housekeeping items, I know that Martin Davis would really appreciate getting everyone’s volunteer hours. As the year draws to a close, please get yourself up to date and get those hours in to Martin.

Even though the weather is getting cold, our organization is still very busy. Sue Adee says that the work on the new pergola in the IDEA garden is about to start. It will be great to have a structure to provide some shade for our 1st Tuesday in the Garden talks, as well as an interesting architectural detail for the garden. I attended a meeting to discuss teacher evaluations of the AgriWorld exhibit at the East Texas State Fair. The teachers provided excellent feedback to the committee and gave everyone some excellent ideas about how to make next year’s exhibit even better next year than it was this year. I also attended the orientation meeting for SCMG Class 15. A great group of prospective Master Gardeners attended & were enthusiastic & eager to begin the program. The calendars have been selling well and I spent the week before Thanksgiving restocking several of our vendors so they’d have stock for the holiday season.

As you’re decorating for the holiday season, don’t forget to put out some Christmas presents for the birds. The Indian corn that was part of my Thanksgiving centerpiece has now been put outside for the birds to eat this month. Until the last cold front came through right before Thanksgiving, I hadn’t seen too many birds at my feeders. I think this is because there was still so much for them to eat in my woods. But now, I notice them all returning to the feeders and feasting on the pine cones I’ve coated with peanut butter & rolled in bird seed. One of my favorite winter morning pastimes is to sit at the kitchen table with my morning coffee and watch the birds flit among the feeders. If you like to do the same thing as I do, think about participating in the Christmas Bird Count from December 14th to January 5th. The Audubon Society would love the information on all the species you can spot in your backyard. For more information on this click on http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/getinvolved.html

As we close out another gardening year, I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas filled with the blessings of the holiday season. And here’s hoping that 2008 will be a wonderful year for each and every one of you.

**Be Ready For Cold Weather**

by Dee Bishop

We always have plants that are special and we hope to carry through the colder parts of the winter. Sometimes just keeping frost off is enough, sometimes keeping the ground from freezing (have we had to worry in years?), or protecting pots of plants all winter is our goal. Here are some things I have tried and had success with. I am sure some of you have even better ideas and I beg you to share them with me to pass on.

Tomato cages used as hot caps. Cover the cage with plastic, if it doesn't touch the leaves, or frost cloth. You can even stuff these cages with straw or wadded up newspaper for even more protection.

Large glass jars, bowls, trash cans, or cardboard boxes make excellent plant covers. Just don't leave them over the plant once the weather warms up during the day or you will have steamed plants!

For very large plants or large areas, hay bales with a plastic top makes a good makeshift green house.

Pots can be nestled down into wood chips, leaves, or pine straw and completely covered until the 'spell' is over.

I keep piles of pine straw indescretely placed all around the yard. When frost is impending, I throw handfuls of it over plants to protect from frost. I can keep quite a few annuals going right up into Dec. doing this.

I am having a blast with my newly acquired mulcher. Hope you are keeping and using all the FREE material we have here in our area. We are so blessed.

EarthKind continued from page 1

These ninety plants are put into the beds randomly and after the initial watering in to get them started, they will be watered only when the soil dries out to one inch depth using a manually controlled drip irrigation system. No fertilizers, herbicides or insecticides will be applied. Their progress will be reviewed regularly over the next three years.

Special thanks go to Craig Reiland and his Rose Garden crew whose help has been invaluable. To the City of Tyler Parks Department who have allowed the use of the park and their people and equipment to assist us. Suppliers of the roses was Chamblee’s Rose Nursery. The compost material came from Vital Earth Resources and the mulch from Trendsetters Recycling Services. Thanks to each of them.

See Keith’s Column in this newsletter for a list of people who volunteered for this project. Go to http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/earthkindtrial.html to view a slide show of pictures showing the work as it was done.
Work Day in the Gardens
December 4th only - starting at 10AM

Executive Committee Meeting - December 12th
The 2008 budget will be finalized.

MG Grapevine Deadline - December 21st

2008 Master Gardener Training
Training begins - January 10, 2008 - full schedule next month

IDEA Garden Series 2008 Schedule
March 4 - Stretch Your Gardening Dollars, Get More Color for the Money
April 1 - Growing Azaleas in East Texas
May 6 - Butterfly Gardens - The Whys & Hows to Attract Butterflies to your Landscape.
June 3 - Texas Superstars - Plants Specifically Adapted to Texas Conditions.

Have you visited the SCMG website lately?
Go to: http://grovesite.com/mg/smg to view changes since the last time you visited. Be sure to look at the Photo Galleries changes and the EarthKind Project page.

Landscape Design Study Course

The courses are held in College Station, TX., and are co-sponsored by Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. and Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M University. They have been attended by many Master Gardeners in the past. It is an opportunity for more in-depth training in landscape design than we normally include in the Master Gardener curriculum. Each course has been approved to qualify for 12 hours of continuing education toward maintaining certification for Master Gardeners. Further information: aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/landscape design courses

This is the first course in a four-part series, although participants can begin with any of the four. The program is nationally accredited by the National Garden Clubs, Inc. and offered at approximately six month intervals here in the Bryan-College Station area. Each of the courses offers an outside lecture. We are pleased to have Dr. Barron Rector of the A&M Department of Rangeland Ecology for this presentation, who will speak on Native Grasses on the Texas Rural and Urban Landscapes.

1517 Front St., Suite 116
Tyler, TX 75702

Merry Christmas