February MG Meeting

The February program will be presented by Larry LeBeau, Wildlife Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife. His program will be on snakes and other wildlife you may encounter in the garden.

We are Invited

The Gertrude Windsor Garden Club has invited Smith Co. Master Gardeners to be their guests to hear Barney Lipscomb of BRIT (Botanical Research Institute of Texas in Fort Worth) speak on "Murderous Plants: Poisonous Herbs in Our World," on February 16, at Willowbrook Country Club. Light refreshments at 10:00 a.m, with the program starting at 10:30am. In order for the Garden Club to have a head count, please RSVP to the Smith Co Extension office (or by email to Keith) no later than Monday Feb. 12, so we can advise the Garden Club how many of us to expect. If you are a certified Master Gardener you may claim 1 CE for attending.

Library Fund

At its December meeting, the Executive Committee was reminded that there is a Library Fund, established in 2001. The purpose was, “To honor the life or the achievements of someone,” by contributing money for the purchase of books for the Master Gardener Reference Library. The books purchased will be either the choice of the donor, or the honoree, or from a wish list. Each book contributed will have a bookplate affixed naming the honoree, the giver and the date.

If you would like to add to the library and honor someone by doing so, please be reminded of this opportunity.

Class XIV MG Training

Training continues with a class of 25 eager students. There is an almost equal number of both men and women this year. Any Master Gardener may sit in on the training class or classes in an effort to expand their knowledge. For those who do this 3 CE credits are earned for each class attended. To insure credit is received, a report of the attendance should be included on the individual's monthly hours report.

Assisting with the classes again this year are Patsy Besch and her dedicated crew. Thanks.

Several conferences are included in the February calendar of classes with information on the conferences elsewhere in the MG Grapevine.

Classes at the Extension office, unless otherwise noted, include the following:

Feb. 6 - MG project overview, tour IDEA, Heritage & other Rose Garden projects.
Feb. 8 - Turfgrass, types culture & maintenance, weed types & control, at Overton, Dr. James McAfee.
Feb. 13 - Soils and Fertility, Dr. Mark McFarland.
Feb. 15 - Home Vegetable, Fruit & Nut Production, start at 9 AM, Tom LeRoy.
Feb. 27 - Landscaping Basics, Keith Hansen

A Tip from Dee

Take cuttings of roses, yews, needleleaf conifers now. Take 6in. tip cuttings. Cut bottom end in a slant just under bud. Dip in rooting hormone. Insert into potting soil or sand. Cover with a jar or plastic bag. They should root in a couple of months.
February is the month of conferences with none bigger than the Spring Landscape and Garden Conference on February 10th at the Rose Garden Center in Tyler.

It may not be spring-like in early February, but this conference always prepares those who attend for the season which will arrive soon.

Registration begins at 7:30AM with the program starting at 8:30AM. The scheduled speakers in the morning session include:

Mary Wilhite, “Attracting Birds & Butterflies”
Billy Kniffen, “Rainwater Harvesting”
Steve Brainard, “Growing Azaleas in East Texas”

Following lunch and an opportunity to view the exhibits, the afternoon lineup includes:

Jim Bohlmann, “Protecting Trees in Your Landscape”
Patsy Besch, “Herbs From the Landscape to the Kitchen”

Our moderators again this year are Craig Reiland and Ted Fisher.

For certified Master Gardeners this is a 6 CE event.

Other conferences in February include:

East Texas Turfgrass Conference on February 1st held at the TAMU Overton center. This all-day conference begins with registration at 8:00AM, with lunch included.

East Texas Fruit & Vegetable Conference on February 20th which is held at the Rose Garden Center in Tyler. Registration at 8:00AM, with the first session at 8:30AM

The complete list of subjects covered and the speakers presenting them may be found by going to http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu and click on ‘programs’.

For certified Master Gardeners each of these conferences is a 4 CE event.

Spring Landscape & Garden Seminar on February 24th at First Methodist Church Faith Center, 400 N. Fredonia Street Longview, Texas ( use the Whaley Street entrance.) The conference, presented by Gregg Co. Master Gardeners, runs from 8:00AM to 1:00PM.

Speakers include: Dr. Garry McDonald and Daniel Duncum. For more information call Gregg County Extension Office - (903) 236-8429.

**THINGS TO DO IN FEBRUARY**
by Dee Bishop

We have enjoyed rain and some fairly cold temps both of which we really needed. February is often a fairly warm month, at least there are always stretches of spring-like weather. Take advantage of these golden opportunities to do some plant whacking.

All your grasses need to be cut to the ground. Tie and wrap string around the grass and cut right at the ground. You will have all that grass bundled and ready for disposal. It is great to add to the compost pile, if you have a properly working compost pile; otherwise you may get lots of seedlings. Now your grasses can come up completely fresh and green.

Cut back all salvias, hibiscus, lantana, echinacea, and all ferns. If you have never cut back your evergreen ferns, do so. You will love how much better they look with completely new foliage. Cut them all back before new growth starts, often toward the end of the month.

Liriope needs to be cut to the nub also. Do it now, before new growth starts. Wait too long and you will have flat tops with ugly cut foliage all summer. This doesn't have to be done every year, unless it gets freeze burned.

Cut back everything perennial that you intend to very soon. Rake all fallen leaves from under azaleas and other evergreens to prevent spread of any disease or insects. Don't forget to use dormant oil. Follow instructions on the bottle. You can use canola oil as well and it's alot cheaper. Oil spray helps to nearly eliminate tiny insect pests such as aphids and whiteflies. Don't use oil spray on Japanese maples though. I don't know why, but have had a little hint cut from a magazine, that says not to; so I don't.

Enjoy February, March is often colder and so windy. We are so fortunate to have so many good gardening days in winter. It frees spring up for planting, and nursery-hopping

**Work in the Gardens**

Work in the gardens, both the IDEA and the Heritage will continue during February each Tuesday. Work begins at 1:00PM each week, provided that the temperature is above 50 degrees.

**Extension Office Phone Numbers**
Phone: 903-590-2980
Fax: 903-590-2984
It’s hard to believe that we soon will be seeing the first burst of spring this month as I’m writing this with predictions of another winter storm heading our way. However, I know that by the end of the month we’ll be seeing daffodils blooming along side the county roads and the saucer magnolias bringing forth their purple and pink blooms. In fact, I saw a sign of the coming spring this morning when I was at Brookshire’s on Rice Rd. Their so-called landscape people have already performed “crape murder” on their crape myrtles. Please remember if you need to prune yours, don’t trim anything larger than a pencil thickness. Most crape myrtles don’t need to be pruned at all.

We have certainly gotten a lot of rain in the past couple of weeks, and it’s great to see the lake levels moving up again. However, the weather has played havoc with our work days in the IDEA and Heritage gardens, so if you can spare an hour or two on Tuesdays, please come out and lend a hand. There is always a lot of work to do in getting the gardens ready for spring planting and your help will be greatly appreciated.

On February 10th Keith’s Horticultural Committee will hold its annual East Texas Landscape and Garden Conference. The committee has come up with a great list of speakers. Jim Bonham, certified arborist will talk about how to avoid stresses, drought and otherwise, that affect tree health. As I have lost two large pine trees in the recent winter storms, I’ll be looking forward to hearing what he has to say. Steve Brainard, the former president of the Azalea Society of America, will speak on growing azaleas in different landscape conditions while conserving water. Our own Patsy Besch will be giving a talk on growing herbs. And last, Billy Kniffen, Extension Agent for Menard County will give a presentation on rainwater harvesting. It should be a most informative day. We still need some help with registration and with the Master Gardening booth, so please remember to sign up at our up-coming meeting.

If you get a chance around the end of the month, take a drive to see Mrs. Lee’s garden. The sight of the fields of daffodils blooming there is guaranteed to brighten the dreariest day.

My own best intentions for working in my garden in January (and doing all those things we’re told to do in our own Master Gardener calendar) were foiled by the weather. I’m hoping for warmer and drier days this month so I can get my gardens off to a good start.

I’m looking forward to seeing you at our February meeting and at the spring gardening conference. Happy Valentine’s Day & good gardening!

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Plant Swap
Doris Waits has two Hardy Oranges (*Poncirus trifoliata*) shrubs to give away. They are between 5-6 ft. tall and have 3/4” diameter stems. These have lovely scented blossoms, inedible fruit and lots of thorns making them a great hedge plant if you have the room. If you would like one or both, call Doris at 903-561-8246 and arrange to dig them up.

New E-Mail Addresses
Kathy Wright - RWRIGHT264 @Gmail.com
Kathy Moore - kmor_45@yahoo.com
George Weisser - jgweisser@suddenlink.net

New Address & Phone No.
Linda Sharp 513 Hyde Park Dr., Tyler, TX 75701
Phone No. 903-526-3848 (No change to e-mail address)

IDEA Garden Series
Later this year there will be another of the IDEA Garden Series at noon. The schedule is as follows:
March 6 - Earthkind Roses
April 3 - Growing Azaleas - Keith Hansen
May 1 - Native Plants for East Texas
June 5 - Firewise Gardening - Anne Brown

MG Association due are due. Give your check to the Treasurer at the MG meeting on February 1st.
Mentor Program Underway
Thank you to everyone who agreed to participate in the Mentor Program. These partnerships are a great way for us to get our new people excited and involved in our many projects and activities. For those of you who have been assigned an Intern, please be sure to contact him/her immediately and set up a time to attend class together. If there are questions or problems, contact Anne Pattullo Rainwater Harvesting Specialist Training
Tarrant County Extension is offering a Master Gardener Rainwater Specialist Training in Tarrant County on February 27 & 28, 2007. This hands-on training will include the installation of a collection system and drip irrigation at an Extension/Master Gardener demonstration site.
Only 30 participant spots are available for this training, so please submit your registration forms in as soon as possible. Registration is on a first come/first serve basis. Payment and forms must be in the Tarrant Co. Extension office by February 16, 2007. Registration fee is $200.
Contact Keith Hansen to answer any questions or provide further information including registration forms.

Landscape Design Study Course
Dr. Bill Welch hosts the latest in the series of Study Courses: Number IV, Series XX - February 19-20, 2007. 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. Each course has been approved to qualify for 12 hours of Continuing Education. For further information go to: http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/LD2_07ann.html.

Texas State Master Gardener Conference
The conference will be held in Kerrville from April 12-14. Registration information is on the web at http://www.hillcountrymastergardeners.org
To register, just print out the registration form and mail it in with your check or money order. The mailing address is noted on the registration form. Early registration runs until March 5, 2007.

International Master Gardener Conference