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The Texas A&M University System

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

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NOTICE
No MG Association Meeting in July

Master Gardener Specialists

The MG Specialist program was initiated to provide advanced training whereby a core of Master Gardeners can obtain a specialization which supports or expands specific county educational programs of Texas Cooperative Extension.

The primary purpose of a Specialist program is not to designate "experts" in a field of study or topic; rather, it is designed to identify Master Gardeners who have received special training to support specific county educational programs or projects. The training is designed to empower the Master Gardener with the knowledge and skills required to effectively support designated programs or projects.

The specialist training is a minimum of 15 hours in length. Training may include: formal classroom training, field trips and tours, mentoring by experts, and/or self-directed study. Following completion of the training requirement, an individual should complete 15 hours of volunteer service in a designated program or project to obtain this title of Master Gardener Specialist.

Smith County MG Specialists as of June 2007 include: Fire Ant Management - Don Davis; Earthkind - Don Davis; Plant Propagation - Joyce Gay and Don Gustafson; Firewise Landscaping - Anne Brown, Dee Bishop and Debbie Hilliard; Rainwater Harvesting - Sue Clark. Not part of this program, but an earlier designation with similar requirements, Master Composter; Don Davis and Tim Krizan.

Announcements of the various Specialist courses are included in the MG Grapevine as they occur. A complete list of the courses may be found at the Texas Master Gardener Association website.

Changes Are Coming

Changes are coming with several projects. Some of them are well known and others are in the planning stages.

The MG Grapevine has a new look as you may have noticed. After years of having the same look, your editor decided to make some changes. Without a lengthy explanation, be aware that the changes make the pdf version for the web a smaller file (quicker to download).

It has been announced by Merlin Eck that the Fall Conference/Bulb Sale will be have several changes. Not only is the location of the Bulb Sale changed to Harvey Hall, but new features have been added, including a photo contest and a raffle. In addition to bulbs, a group of plants will be offered for sale. Speakers for the conference will be Keith Kridler and Steven Chamblee. More information will be available later.

Initial plans for adding a pergola to the IDEA Garden patio area have been made. With a design by Bill Kelldorf, preliminary costs have been developed. It is expected that this pergola will enhance the patio area, especially for those who participate in the programs offered there. Final plans and costs are expected by mid-August.

Ag-ucation has been part of the East Texas State Fair for several years and the SCMGs have participated each year. The name of the event and its location are both changing for the 2007 fair. The name will be Agri-world and the event will be held in the Commercial Exhibits building. Each exhibitor will present a “learning experience” display which will remain in place during the entire run of the fair. Details will be available soon.
What a difference a year makes! Last year the lakes were drying up, and now it won’t quit raining. But, we’d better not complain!! As I have written in other places, the frequent rain and humidity are keeping vegetation wet, which makes for very good conditions for plant diseases.

A couple of web sites to help with plant diseases you might want to bookmark. The Texas Plant Disease Handbook has descriptions of common diseases of common plants in various categories, including landscape trees and shrubs, vegetables, and fruits.

http://plantpathology.tamu.edu/TexLab/index.htm Even though no control measures are listed, it can help in the first step of identifying what is wrong with a plant.

http://sickplants.tamu.edu is Dr. Kevin Ong, Extension Plant Pathologist in Dallas web site, where he posts semi-regularly common disease problems that are occurring. For homeowner disease control products, see the online publication at the Texas Cooperative Extension “Bookstore”:

http://tcebookstore.org/tmppdfs/19242643-E159.pdf

Another regional web site is called City Bugs (http://citybugs.tamu.edu), created by Extension Entomologist Dr. Mike Merchant. It has publications and news releases on insect problems in north Texas.

If you missed the June meeting, I announced that we have made copies of the CD compiled by Montgomery Extension Horticulturist Tom LeRoy and his Master Gardeners which has one of the most complete collections of Texas and other southern state’s Extension horticulture publications. Each publication is in the Acrobat pdf format and can be either viewed on your computer screen or printed for reference. There are still some copies available for any Master Gardener who might want one for your reference library.

As I mentioned, all this rain and humidity has created a perfect environment for disease development. Powdery mildew on dogwoods, squash and other cucurbits, blackspot on roses, and gray leaf spot on St. Augustine are among the common problems we are currently seeing.

I am experimenting with a different form of communication - I have created a “blog” – an online web log, called East Texas Gardening, to which I irregularly post notes and items I hope will be interest to gardeners in our area. For example, I have information on gray leaf spot, which also contains links to an article with control options. I also am chronicling my battle with moles in my yard. This blog is meant to provide timely information on pests, problems, programs and plants in a brief, informal format. For you computer geeks, you can also subscribe to it using an RSS or Atom feed, so you can easily find out if something new has been posted. I hope you find it useful. Its address is http://tceblogs.tamu.edu/mt/etg

Take care of yourself this summer – drink plenty of water while working outside, and wear sunscreen, a hat and clothing to protect you from the strong rays of the sun.

SCMG Assumes Responsibility for the Heritage Garden

The Gertrude Windsor Garden Club has officially ended their association with the Heritage Rose Garden. The SCMG Executive Committee has agreed to take full responsibility for the care and maintenance of this beautiful garden. A committee consisting of Craig Reiland, Casey Brownlow of Wilhite Landscaping, Keith Hansen and Anne Brown are now in the process of developing a long-range plan for the garden. More details of this plan will be forthcoming as the plan takes shape.

2008 Nominating Committee Named

The 2008 Nominating Committee has been appointed and will be working on candidates for the slate of officers for next year. Members of the committee are Sue Adee, Anne Brown, June McClain, Jean Watson and Jan Moch.

The committee will be looking for nominees for Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, two members-at-large, state director and alternate state director. If any of you would like to serve, or would like to nominate another member (make sure that individual is willing to serve before you suggest a name to the committee) contact any of the committee members.

The slate of nominees will be announced at the October Master Gardener meeting and voting will take place at the November meeting.

Speaker’s Bureau

During May the following people gave talks: Craig Reiland and Don Davis to a total of 29 people.

In addition to that the Rose Garden docents conducted two tours with a total of 80 participants.

On June 26th Anne Brown presented a program on Firewise Landscaping to the Tyler Men’s Garden.
Rathbone's Ramblings

Lately when I’m not weeding my garden, I’m walking around with notebook in hand planning what I’m going to move, divide or discard this fall. This activity invariably leads me to think about passalong plants. A few years ago I heard Steve Bender give a talk where he said that one should always be careful about passalong plants because there is a reason why they have that name. The entire audience burst into laughter when he said that, and I was one of the people laughing, but I didn’t really give it a lot of thought at the time. Now, however, I know exactly what he was talking about. For there are good passalong plants and there are the others. In the first category, of course I put the daylilies that I get from my two main daylily enablers. Every year we share on-line albums of our blooms and each fall share divisions of each others’ favorites. Also in this category are unusual or hard to find plants - the Byzantine gladiolas that are dug up and shared at a plant swap, the cuttings of a beautiful brugmansia given by a friend, or transplants of heirloom tomatoes brought to share at a Master Gardener meeting. All of these are welcome in my garden and I enjoy taking my morning walks thinking of each and every person who has given me a treasured plant.

But then there are those other “gifts” lie the plant that was said to be an “attractive groundcover” with a nice fragrance. This turned out to be chameleon plant and I rue the day that I planted it before I investigated how it would march across a flower bed. I think this gardening “gift” may be with me forever. There are also the elephant ears and the cannas that seem to be indestructible. After I got them out of my beds, I threw them on our burn pile. They have now been consumed by flames about four times, but they keep coming back from the ashes bigger and better than ever. My husband now thinks that any plant that wants to live that badly should be given a spot somewhere on our property to flourish. I haven’t quite agreed to that yet, but they do make me smile when I see them return from the dead over and over again. I see them as an object lesson to always read up on the gifts to your garden before they are planted in the ground.

Summer has officially begun, and I’m hoping it will bring some drier weather. I know I’d like the rain to end long enough for our woods to dry out so my husband can mow down the weeds that are growing like crazy. It’s been so wet at our house he hasn’t been able to get the tractor out there since the beginning of April.

The fruits and vegetables are appearing in all their summer abundance at the Farmers’ Market and our local farmer’s stands. If you get a chance, check out the organic farmers’ market in front of Bed, Bath and Beyond on Saturdays. The produce available is all locally grown and is wonderful. As you’re working in your gardens in this hot and humid weather remember to drink lots of water and protect yourself from the sun and the insects that seem to be everywhere.

Happy gardening & have a wonderful Fourth of July.

T.L.C. for Perennials and Annuals
by Dee Bishop

DEADHEAD all flowering plants to increase flowering season. Keeping them from making seed prolongs bloom time.

WATER as needed. A good test to see if water is needed, besides your finger, is to stick a sharp pencil into the soil. If soil adheres to the pencil, no water is needed. (No worry about that this summer-so far.)

FERTILIZE after heavy rains, but lightly. Fertilize pots often as nutrients are depleted with every watering.

TRIM flowering shrubs directly after flowering ceases if they need it. Now is the time to cut your hydrangeas and gardenias back if needed.

MULCH to keep weeds at bay and to keep moisture levels more even and the soil cooler.

DIVIDE perennials when blooms begin to decrease in size or number or to keep plants in bounds.

SEPARATE bulbs now through Sept. or so. You can cut off the foliage if you haven’t already.

SAVE SEEDS from perennials and annuals to increase stock or to share with friends.

CUTTINGS can be taken from woody shrubs and perennials. Keep them in a shady area that you can water as needed.

If your Impatiens are too tall, they ‘stretch’ with hot weather, cut them back some to thicken them.

Enjoy your beautiful garden and watch it be enjoyed by Hummingbirds, Songbirds, and Butterflies.

New Address & Phone Number
Donna Montgomery
773 CR 4908
Troup, TX 75791
Phone Number: 903-842-4695
Entomology Specialist Training

Entomology training, August 27 - 31, will include experts speaking on insect identification, insect diversity, insect pest management, pesticide safety, insects in the garden and landscape, butterfly gardening, digital photography for insect identification, biting and stinging insects, collecting methods and shipping techniques. Participants have the option of making or improving their own collection during the course.

Most of the course will be conducted at the Dallas Research and Extension Center, 17360 Coit Road, Dallas, TX 75252. Registration fee is $270 per person.

For more information, contact Kimberly Schofield, Extension Entomology, at k-schofield@tamu.edu or 972-952-9221.

SFA Scholarship Recipient Thank You

Heather Riley lives in Smith County and commutes to school. She recently received a SCMG scholarship and said, in her thank you note, “I wanted you to know how grateful I am and how much I appreciate your help. I live in Smith County and plan to stay in the area.” She is using the scholarship to pay, in part, for her summer program.

Brent Pemberton Thanks Master Gardeners

In his comments publicizing the Overton Horticultural Field Day on June 28th, Brent Pemberton said, “The Smith County Master Gardeners Association is an integral part of these trials.” Furthermore he said, “They provide hundreds of hours of labor every year. They are how we get these things planted and how we get this done.”

This project at the Overton TAMU Research center has been one of the most popular for MG volunteers. During 2006 and thus far in 2007, over 2000 volunteer hours have been reported.

Winner’s Circle Plants at the IDEA Garden

Each year, as part of the plant trials at TAMU centers in Overton and Dallas and the Dallas Arboretum, a list of plants are named to the “North Texas Winner’s Circle.” IDEA Garden visitors can view plants from the 2002 thru 2006 lists. They are planted next to the patio.

For more information and a complete list of the plants, go to: http://overton.tamu.edu/flowers/index.htm

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