



McLennan County Master Gardeners

Horticulture Newsletter

Fall, 2008

www.mclennanmastergardeners.org

Call 757-5180 for information on upcoming extension events.

From the McLennan County Master Gardeners

Check out the website:

www.mclennanmastergardeners.org

Calendar of Events:

October 2-11, 2008 - Heart of Texas Fair

Oct. 2, 3-5 p.m. - Hay Show at the Fair

October 4-5, 2008 - Texas Association of
Cactus & Succulent Societies conference
Carleen Bright Arboretum, see
centexcactus.com for additional information.

CHILDREN'S GARDEN FAIR

The Carleen Bright Arboretum in Woodway and the McLennan County Master Gardeners will host a Children's Garden Fair on Sunday afternoon, October 19 from 3 to 5:00 pm. at the arboretum at 9001 Bosque Blvd. The event is free and open to all children accompanied by an adult.

There will be demonstrations and activities of various gardening topics throughout the grounds. Worm composting, rainwater harvesting, insect identification, rock painting, leaf rubbing, making grow cards and plants from cuttings are some of the offerings.

FLOWER POT RECYCLING

Help the environment by reducing the number of flower pots placed in the landfill. The Master Gardeners have placed a collection bin at the south rear corner of the Texas AgriLife Extension office parking lot, 420 North Sixth Street. If you need extra pots, check the bin and help yourself. Thanks to all who are recycling the pots!

CHECK OUT THE VIDEOS!!

The McLennan County Master Gardeners have made a number of gardening videos for the City of Waco Cable Channel. The various topics may be viewed on: http://www.waco-texas.com/city_depts/municipal_information/watch.htm under "Good Gardening"

GARDEN ON PUBLIC T.V.

The back yard/garden of McLennan Co. Master Gardener, James Bays, will be featured on the "Central Texas Gardener" television program in November.

The program is scheduled to air on these local PBS stations as well as TV stations in Austin, San Antonio, College Station and Portales, N.Mex.

KWBU-TV (Waco) - Saturday, November 15 at 3:30 p.m. & Thursday, November 20 at 2 p.m.

KNCT-TV (Killeen) Saturday, November 15, 1:30 p.m., Sunday, November 16, 5:30 p.m.

In the Fall, "Mums" the Word:

For instant fall color, chrysanthemums are one of the most enjoyable plants in the landscape. Budded plants are now available in the nurseries and there is a multitude of colors to choose from. Red, white, purple, yellow, bronze, orange and assorted variations are ready as bedding plants to take home and perk up the autumn landscape. For longer bloom, select plants with buds rather than all open blossoms. Their dark green leaves complement the many forms and shapes of mums that are available.



Mums make great container plants as well as set out in the ground. Tolerant of sun or partial shade, they will need watered frequently. Large potted mums can make a colorful and attractive statement of welcome at a front door. Ornamental grasses are good companion plants with mums. After finishing the bloom cycle, the potted plant can be transplanted to a garden area. Frequent pinching back in spring and early summer should result in fall blooms the following year. Mums can be propagated by stem cuttings as well as division in the spring.

TIME TO

..Apply lawn pre-emergent herbicides in September.

..Sow seeds of cool-weather vegetables, herbs and greens that thrive through the winter. Turnips, mustard greens, lettuce, radishes, and Swiss chard can be planted from seeds. Swiss chard, kale, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower are available as bedding plants.

..Plant wildflowers now. Plant in open, sunny and lightly cultivated soil. Rake the seed into the soil lightly and water. Spring bloom should result with adequate fall rainfall.

..Divide spring flowering perennials (iris, Shasta daisy, cannas, daylilies, violets, lirope, ajuga). Reset the plants at the same depth level in their new location. Firm soil around them and water well. They will establish roots over winter and be ready for spring growth and bloom. Share the excess with your friends and neighbors who comment on your beautiful flowers and landscape.

..Plant spring blooming pansies, snapdragons, dianthus, flowering cabbage and kale, and other cool-season annuals when weather cools. Or plant the seeds now and then transplant to garden later.

..Use Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) products to control green loopers in cole crops.

..Spring flowering bulbs should be planted in the fall. Cultivate the soil well and add generous amounts of organic material to improve drainage. Bulbs will rot without proper drainage. Refrigerate tulips and hyacinths for 6-8 weeks before planting as they need chilling.

..Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs, but wait until January or February to do any major pruning.

..Clean up the garden, removing annuals that have completed their life cycle. Cut back perennials that have finished flowering.

..Replenish mulch material where needed. Ask your neighbors for their fallen leaves to use as mulch or compost. Gather bags of leaves from the curbs and recycle into your garden, flower beds or compost bin.

Water thoroughly every week to 10 days, but do not overwater.

Texas Gold' Columbine

A shade-blooming perennial named 'Texas Gold' Columbine is one of the plants designated as a Texas Superstar. The *Aquiligia chrysantha* rewards the gardener with butter yellow blossoms from late March through early May. The scalloped, bluish gray-green foliage is compact and attractive. This Texas native plant is tough and elegant. The blooms are highlighted by graceful cups and long, dramatic spurs which are held well above the foliage on long, branching stems. They make good cut flower specimens and are attractive to hummingbirds. The majority of plants known for their striking blossoms prefer sunny locations, but this plant thrives in dappled shade.

An ideal site would be under a canopy of deciduous trees to receive partial shade, rather than a dense shade site. Provide well drained soil and incorporate a slow-release fertilizer. The foliage will reach about 24" high. In late summer if the foliage becomes unattractive, cut back all foliage to a few inches above the crown of the plant. When temperatures cool in fall, new leaves will emerge.

To maximize its landscape performance, arrange the plants in easy, natural drifts, mass them in the perennial border, or tuck them anywhere you need bold spring color. They also freely set seeds and will establish new plants the following season.

He who plants a
garden,
Plants happiness.



PLANT TREES AND SHRUBS NOW...

. . Fall is the perfect time to plant trees and shrubs. Plan before you plant. It is easier to move the plants on paper than to dig them after planting in the wrong place

. . Every plant should have a purpose. Is it for shade, screening, privacy? How large will it be in five to ten years? Is it in the right place?

. . Be sure to purchase healthy, well-grown plants and from a reputable dealer. A plant bargain is no bargain if it dies.

. . Plant properly:

Dig a hole large enough in diameter so that the root system has six inches of clearance on all sides. The root ball should rest on a solid soil foundation, so don't dig the hole much deeper than the ball.

Plant the tree or shrub slightly above the level of the surrounding soil, to allow for settling and increased soil drainage.

Carefully place the plant in the hole, handle by the root ball, not the trunk. (Remove the container before planting)

Backfill the hole, using the native soil removed from the hole and firm the soil around the plant.

Water thoroughly to settle the soil around the roots and eliminate any air pockets.

Do not fertilize now. Wait until early spring to lightly fertilize.

Add 4 to 6 inches of mulch (compost, grass clippings, pine bark or leaves) around the base of newly planted trees and shrubs. This helps keep down weeds and conserves soil moisture.

1. Overwatering.

Overwatering, or improper watering, encourages shallow root systems, stresses plants making them more susceptible to pests, and wastes water if runoff occurs. Roots in waterlogged soil cannot breathe, so plants wilt, turn yellow, and die. Watering is best done on an infrequent, as-needed basis early in the morning when the least amount will be lost to evaporation from heat or wind. Water so that the soil is wet several inches down, encouraging deep rooting and drought tolerance.

2. Overfertilizing.

Proper fertilizing creates healthier plants able to resist pests and environmental stresses, but too much can cause excessive new growth, making a plant more susceptible to disease. Overapplication of fertilizer can burn tender plants. Read labels and follow the recommended application.

3. Misusing pesticides.

Identify the pest and use an appropriate pesticide. Too many chemical pesticides can upset the balance of nature and often the beneficial insects will be affected as well as the pests. Mix according to directions and use carefully. Control the bad guys and encourage the good guys of the insect world.

4. Improperly identifying a plant problem.

Plant problems can be caused by an insect, disease or environmental factors. Identify the problem before getting out a spray. Insects will chew, feed internally on a plant, or pierce and suck. Diseases are caused by fungi, viruses, bacteria, or nematodes. Environmental causes include too much or too little water, light, nutrients or chemicals. If unable to identify the problem, break off some leaves or infected parts and take to a knowledgeable garden center or the county extension agent for identification and suggested treatment.

5. Using plants that are unproductive

and/or poorly adapted to your area.

Before you plant, learn what plants (trees, shrubs, perennials, vegetables, fruits) are recommended for your area and that produce well. Not every plant is adapted to every area of Texas, thus don't fight Mother Nature.

6. Planting the right plant in the wrong place.

When placing a plant, consider its mature size and its need for sunlight or shade. Plants may look small and out of place in the one-gallon size pot, but learn what size it will be in five to ten years and take that into consideration when choosing its location.

7. Failing to prepare soil before planting.

Eliminate weeds, till the soil, add organic matter, aerate compacted soil. Healthy soil alive with nutrients and microorganisms produces healthy plants that have few problems.

8. Failing to use mulch.

A layer of organic or inorganic mulch will help the soil retain moisture, moderate soil temperature, keep down weeds and make weeds that do appear easier to remove. A 2 to 4 inch of organic materials twice a year is recommended for most garden and landscape plants. When the mulch decomposes, it can be turned into the garden soil to further improve the soil structure.

9. Planting at the wrong time.

Timing is important, especially in growing vegetables. Planting dates and maturity dates of vegetables vary across the many areas of the state. The local extension office and gardening publications have listings of appropriate varieties for the area and planting times.

10. Failing to think long term.

Train yourself to think ahead to mature size of plantings and their locations as well as maintenance of those plantings. Will they

need constant pruning, too close to driveway or house. Overcrowded plants will compete for food, water and sunlight which creates stress and more insect and disease problems.

from *Doug Welsh's Texas Garden Almanac*. (2007) *Doug Welsh is professor and extension horticulturist at Texas A&M University.*

"...Bug Talk..."

APHIDS

Aphids, or plant lice, are small, soft-bodied insects which are common pests of nearly all indoor and outdoor ornamental plants, as well as vegetables, field crops and fruit trees. There are hundreds of different species of aphids, some of which attack only one host plant, while others attack numerous hosts. Most are about 1/10 inch long, commonly green and black, but they may be one of many other colors. A characteristic common to all species is the presence of two tubes, called cornicles, on the back ends of their bodies. The cornicles secrete defensive substances.

Aphids feed in clusters and generally prefer new, succulent shoots or young leaves. They have unusual and complex life cycles which allow them to build up tremendous populations in relatively short periods of time. There are many generations per year as each female aphid produces 50 to 100 daughters during her life span, and each daughter can begin reproducing almost immediately.

Aphids have piercing-sucking mouthparts and cause damage by sucking the plant juices. They are commonly found on the stems, undersides of leaves and on flower buds in colonies of individuals. Their ability to transmit plant virus diseases may be more harmful than any direct feeding damage. High aphid populations cause leaf curl, wilting, stunting of shoot growth, and delay in production of

flowers and fruit, as well as a general decline in plant vigor.

Aphids produce large amounts of a sugary liquid waste called "honeydew". The honeydew that drops from these insects can spot the windows and finish of cars parked under infested trees. A fungus called sooty mold can grow on honeydew deposits that accumulate on leaves and branches, turning them black. The appearance of this sooty mold on plants may be the first time that an aphid infestation is noticed. The drops can attract other insects such as ants, that will feed on the sticky deposits.

Early detection is the key to reducing aphid infestations. High-pressure water sprays can be applied to the undersides of leaves to reduce aphid populations, but because of their rapid reproductive rates, managing aphids takes repeated applications. Natural enemies of aphids are lady beetles, lacewings, damsel bugs, certain parasitic wasps, and birds and without them, these pests would be much more destructive. Insecticidal soap, neem oil, organic or chemical products can be applied to manage the insects, however these products are harmful to beneficial insects. Read the labels before applying any pesticide.

EARTH KIND

Environmental Stewardship Program

Earth Kind uses research-proven techniques to provide maximum gardening and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting our environment.

The objective of Earth Kind is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping principles to create a new horticultural system based on real-world effectiveness and environmental responsibility.

The principles of Earth Kind include:

- Water conservation

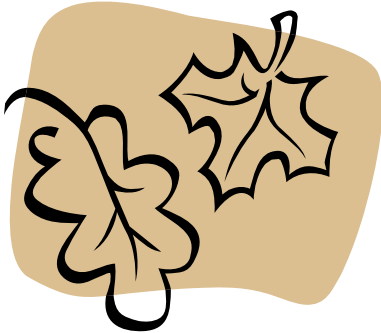
- Safe use and handling of fertilizers and pesticides

Reduction of yard wastes entering urban landfills

Landscaping for energy conservation

Fall fertilization applications are common and typically recommended to prepare plants for winter. The type and amount of fertilizer to apply should be based upon results of a soil test. In the absence of this information, 1 to 2 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq.ft., from a no/low phosphorus fertilizer material, generally meets the needs of most plants. Remember: misapplication (not the type or amount of fertilizer used) is the most frequent cause of surface and groundwater contamination.

Mulching is a valuable Earth Kind practice that can preserve valuable natural resources and contribute to the aesthetic appearance of the landscape. Using leaves as a mulch is a simple and effective way to recycle this organic material. Apply a 3 to 6 inch layer of shredded leaves around the base of trees and shrubs. In annual and perennial beds, a 2 to 3 inch mulch of shredded leaves is ideal.



Leaves may also be collected and worked directly into garden and flower bed soils. A 6 to 8 inch layer of leaves tilled into a heavy, clay soil will improve aeration and drainage. A recommended strategy for using leaves to improve the soil is to collect them and work them into the soil during the fall. This allows sufficient time for the leaves to decompose prior to spring planting. Adding a little fertilizer to the soil after working in the leaves will hasten their decomposition.

To prepare compost, organic material, microorganisms, air, water and a small amount of nitrogen are needed. The nitrogen, air and water provide a favorable environment

for the microorganisms to decompose the organic materials and make compost.

Additional ideas for fall Earth Kind practices are available on the Earth Kind website: <http://earthkind.tamu.edu>

A number of publications regarding Earth Kind principles can be found on this website.

WAYS TO CONTACT US.....

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