

THE LATEST DIRT

McLennan County Master Gardener Association
Volume XI Issue 4 April 2009

President's Letter

"To persevere". Webster defines **perseverance: persist determinedly;** to persist steadily in an action or belief, usually over a long period and especially despite problems or difficulties. The Bible acknowledges the persistence of a Godly man: "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial.....for he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.". What a great word! I like to call it "keep on keeping on". An example of perseverance is the Woodpecker Finch. This bird acquires a cactus spine or a small twig to extract grubs out of holes in tree branches. If the first tool he picks does not do the job the finch finds another and another until just the right twig can be held in its beak, shoved down the hole in the branch, prying the grub out. That takes perseverance. If we desire to enjoy the fruits of success we must first determine to persevere. To give up assures defeat. As Master Gardeners we strive to grow the biggest tomato, to have the greenest lawn, to have the most beautiful trees, and the largest, reddest, and most fragrant rose. But our compost pile reveals the sad truth of multiply, embarrassing failures. Years ago when I started growing cacti a successful grower in San Antonio, Cactus Marty recognizing my inexperience said. "Before you learn how to grow cactus you have to kill a thousand of them." Hopefully Marty was exaggerating, but as I reflect on my years as a cactus enthusiast and consider my disappointments, I must be getting real close to becoming an expert.

Don't give up. Success is just around the corner. Start growing plants which will make you a winner. Try squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, and then move on to.....eggplants or artichokes. Grow nice green Bermuda grass, without weeds and dead spots, then move on to more difficult grasses. Grow a chinaberry tree, trim it and prune it into nice shade tree. If you don't kill it you might just be ready for a Japanese maple with tiny red leaves. Most of all, don't hesitate to ask others for help. Remember the only dumb question is the question that is never asked. A Master Gardener must first master the art of learning and realize that perseverance is the conduit to success. So, look forward to each failure this growing season because you may be only one failure away from victory.

The recent rains have turned the world around us green and launched another spring in Central Texas. We enthusiastically absorb the new life that surrounds us. Yet, the air is somewhat bittersweet as we sense the loss of our friend Mark Reese. As a Master Gardener, Mark persevered to the end.

Finally, don't forget to well just don't forget.

Steven Lovecky

NIGHT MEETING THIS MONTH

McLennan County Master Gardener Association Officers 2009

President- Steven Lovecky Vice President- Jan Serface Secretary- Nelda Cooper
Treasurer- Louie McDaniel Sponsor- Shane McLellan Newsletter- James Storrs
Send volunteer hours to Julia Khoury at 8512 Bosque, Waco 76712, or tkhoury@hotmail.com
www.mclennanmastergardeners.org

Program Preview

Date: Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Time: **6:00 PM**

Place: **Home of John and Dawn Segrest**

Directions in the text box to the right.

“Since we are coming to my house we will start with a tour of our yard. We have had to replace 35 rose bushes this year due to the fact that we had two new grandsons born last year and our garden was neglected, and with the harsh drought and new babies last year the garden suffered.

I will have light snacks and drinks for the meeting and program. The program will be some highlights of our trip to the Northwest in October 2008. Our trip included Newport Beach, Oregon, Crater Lake National Park, Obsidian Flow/Newberry Volcanic Monument, and Portland Rose and Japanese Gardens.”

-Dawn

Present at March Meeting

Jane Anderson, James Bays, Bonnie Belanger, Dick Belanger, Linda Buckner, Ila Jean Carothers, Nelda Cooper, Jean Cunningham, Irene Dauphin, Anita Dawson, Kim Dougherty, Eva FitzGerald, Kris Ford, Xan Foulks, Brenda Golubski, Jene Hering, Julia Khoury, Steven Lovecky, Louie McDaniel, Barbara Mersinger, Andrea Moore, Maureen Moulden, Georgia Peterson, Anne Plasek, Art Reinking, Carol Reinking, Sharon Richardson, Dawn Segrest, Della Setser, Gale Storey, Mary Lou Trice, Robin Urbanovsky, Barbara Vance, Jo Von Rosenberg, Melba Waldrop, MJ Whitehead, Genova Wilson, Carol Wood.

Interns:

Karen Dotson, Cindy Geletzke, Clara Henderson, Missy Kinder, Donna Lindsey, Elizabeth Milam, Gerry Milnor, James Storrs, Sonia Warriner.

- Nelda Cooper, Secretary

From Waco:

Take exit 322 off of I-35 and continue down access road until you come to the first bridge. Turn left across the bridge. At the stop sign continue going straight. You are now on South Old Temple Road and about a hundred yards or so the Rosenthal Road will tee off to the left - **Don't Take It!** Keep going straight. (Incidentally, South Old Temple Road was at one time the road from Waco to Temple, and is the same road Clyde Barrow took south when he escaped from the Waco Jail on March 11, 1930, after Bonnie Parker smuggled a gun in to him.) The speed limit on this road is 30.

Some distance down South Old Temple Road (about 3/4 mile) you will first cross what we call “Three Ton Bridge” because it has a sign to that effect (slow down here because of the huge dip). Shortly thereafter you will come to a fork in the road. **At the fork go Left.** You are now on Creek Road. The creek is called “Cow Bayou.”

Hopefully you are now running parallel to the creek on Creek Road. My house, 680 Creek Road is the **4th house on the right** about 6/10ths of a mile.

Call if you have any trouble. 855-9009/744-6778

Membership

Please add Xan Foulks, 4125 Westchester, Waco 76710, 254-751-1766, to your yearbook roster. Xan transferred from Anderson County Master Gardeners.

New e-mail Jene Hering: jhering1127@att.net

Minutes- March 2009

President Steven Lovecky opened the noon meeting at the Arboretum. The February minutes were approved as written.

Treasurer's Report:

Louie McDaniel reported that the ending balance for Feb. 28 was \$11,315.44.

Business:

Three interns received their Master Gardener pins. Congratulations to Irene Dauphin, Anne Plasek, and Mary Lou Trice for completing their education and volunteer hours. Barbara Vance reviewed changes to the bylaws.

Projects & Committees:

Preparations are underway for two workdays on the Arboretum Trial Garden. The first will be Sat., March 21 and the second will be March 25. Both will begin at 9 am. The docent training class will be April 1 at 1:00 at the Arboretum. New docents will lead tours after the Master Gardener meeting on April 8. The first public tour will be May 9.

A Cedar Ridge Elementary workday is scheduled for April 16 at 9 am. The "Day in the Garden" will be held April 17 from 8:30-3:00.

An Earth-kind demo bed workday at TSTC is scheduled for April 6 at 9 am.

HOT Urban Gardening Coalition volunteer opportunities are every Friday at the Community Garden. Contact Penny Gifford to help.

WWE Vegetable Garden workday will be March 28 at 9 am. Contact Kim Dougherty.

The McLennan County Government Week appreciation day will be May 19. Those wishing to provide cookies can sign up at the April meeting.

Beasts & Blooms will be April 18-19 at the zoo. We will provide a booth for gardening activities for children.

The Gardener's Gathering will be April 26 at the Arboretum.

Announcements:

Ila Jean Carothers reported that the TSTC scholarship recipients sent nice thank-you letters.

The Master Gardener field trip to Texas A&M is planned for May 28.

A workday and presale is scheduled for May 9 at James Bays. The Plant Sale will be May 16.

Master Gardener Publicity Chairman, Carol Reinking passed a sign-up sheet around for those wishing to offer suggestions or to help with publicity.

The next composting class will be April 23 & 24 at the Wetlands. Limited space is available.

The 2009 TMGA Conference will be April 23-25 in Marshall, Texas.

The meeting was adjourned.

Program:

Ila Jean Carothers showed a film from the Central Texas Gardener program on PBS of James Bays' Garden.

The next meeting will be April 8 at 6 pm at the arboretum.

-Nelda Cooper

Join a Tour Group- Earn Hours!

How often do you get volunteer hours for free garden tours???

Master Gardener volunteers are needed on April 8 at 1 p.m. to form tour groups so the new docent class can practice leading walks through the Arboretum. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

-Barbara Vance

Annual Pre-Sale Plant Sale

James Bays' annual sale will be on May 9 at 3:00. This gives us the opportunity to shop early before everything goes to the **MCMG plant sale May 16**. This year James has invited us all for his famous hamburgers after the sale. You do not have to purchase a plant to come. Families are welcome. Please RSVP to Barbara Mersinger ,(Plant Sale Chairman), 751-7459 or James Bays (829-0076).

-Jeanette Kelly

Last Call for Subscriptions

We will collect checks at the April meeting for those who want to subscribe or renew their subscriptions to the *Texas Gardener* magazine. Remember that the association gets to keep a portion of the subscription price through this offer.

1 year - \$21.95, 2 yr. - \$37.95, 3 yr. - \$47.95. Make checks out to MCMG (McLennan Co. Master Gardeners).

-Ila Jean Carothers



Volunteer Opportunities

April and May are going to be very busy for all of us. "We Need You", Master Gardeners! Come out, get involved, and get to know each other. We have quite a variety of projects that should be of interest to you all.

April 1 & 29:00 CBA Pond Spring Cleaning (Louie McDaniel)

April 1.....1- 4 p.m. Docent Training (Brenda Golubski)

April 4..... 9:00 Arboretum Trail Garden workday (Barbara Vance)

April 6.....9:00 TSTC Rose garden (Jo VonRosenberg)

(NEW) April 8..... 1:00 Docent tours of CBA for MG's at 1:00 (Brenda Golubski)
(Master Gardeners are invited come take a tour with the new docents as part of their training practice)

April 16.....9:00 Prep day for the Day in the Garden at Cedar Ridge (Sandy Back)

April 17.....8:30-3:00 Day In The Garden With the Children (Sandy Back)

April 18 & 19... Beasts & Blooms and Earth Day at CMP Zoo (Jeanette Kelly)

April 24.....Planting at WWE (TTBA) (Kim Dougherty)

April 26.....1- 4:00 p.m. Gardeners Gathering at Carleen Bright Arboretum (Jeanette Kelly)

May 4.....8:00 TSTC Rose Garden (JoVonRosenberg)

May 9..... 3 p.m. Pre Plant Sale at James Bays' house followed by a Hamburger Cookout. RSVP to Barb Mersinger (751-7459) or James Bays (829-0076)

May 9..... Docents will do the first series of public tours at CBA

May 16.....9-3 p.m. MCMG Plant Sale (Barb Mersinger)

-Jeanette Kelly

Links of Possible Interest

<http://www.emmitsburg.net/gardens/articles/adams/2008/hardscape.htm> Hardscape in Landscape

Article "Tomatoes Out in the Cold" in latest weekly issue of Texas Gardener Seeds, a free e-magazine available from Texas Gardener, www.texasgardener.com Suggested by Julia Khoury.

Also suggested by Julia- "Vinegar Uses and Misuses," from Dirt Doctor Weekly Newsletter, dirtdoctor.com

<http://www.finegardening.com/pguide/pronunciation-guide-to-botanical-latin.aspx>
an outstanding pronunciation guide for botanical names

<http://www.jludsonseeds.net/> This is one of Judy Tye's favorite mail-order companies.

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/2306/> Labeling methods for plants

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/2333/> Is this plant the new hosta? (coleus)

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/2131/> The hackberry- some respect at last?

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/2071/> Genus, species and cultivars- oh my!

Horticultural Epiphany

Manuel Flores is a Harvard-trained horticulturist base in San Antonio. His article, reprinted here with his permission, appears on his website. © M. Flores

There was a time when I thought native plants were the best for our landscapes. They were, regrettably, not the most attractive or commercially available specimens. But it made sense, in some perversely logical fashion, to believe a landscape would be most likely to endure if it consisted of plants native to that particular region. After all, if it had evolved in that zone, with its unique combination of soils and climate, what could go wrong? For one, pests that evolved with it and were able to evade its chemical defenses, would cause problems. Thus, the few insects who can eat the leaves of Texas Mountain Laurel and also not succumb to the toxic brew of alkaloids they contain, will defoliate them if insecticides are not used.

While such defoliation has not killed a Texas Mountain Laurel in nature, it will render it unsightly. Levels of herbivore predation which are not life-threatening can ruin the

visual appeal and landscape usefulness of a native plant. Even though some pesticides would be needed periodically in a landscape of indigenous plants, I still thought they were superior. I rationalized that the sprayings were merely needed for cosmetic, not vital, reasons.

Then came the real estate crash of the mid-to late-eighties. Foreclosed properties were everywhere. Their landscapes received no or minimal irrigation, fertilization or maintenance. Did the non-native plants dry up and blow away? They didn't! Even after a dry summer with no irrigation, the alien flora stayed green. The Asian Jasmine, Chinese Photinia, Oleander, Cotoneaster, Pomegranate, Holly, Palms, India Hawthorn, Bamboo, Loquat, Nandina, Pittosporum, Xylosma and others refused to die.

Of course, some did not look too good. But the scorched and weakened specimens were usually in beds with thin soils and had received no soil modification by the "landscapers" who had installed them. However, where real landscapers had done

the installation, or the soils were originally deeper, all was well.

Thus, one day, I experienced a horticultural epiphany.

The revelation was that Texas native plants were not the only ones that could persist and possibly naturalize in this area. As long as the species had evolved in a site with similar soils and climate, and was installed correctly, it could live with minimal human intervention once well-established.

Plants from China, Korea, parts of Central Asia, the highlands of Mexico and subtropical

Mediterranean climate zones throughout the world could become transplanted Texans.

Don't let the parochial proponents of xeriscaping and other plant nativists browbeat you into filling your landscape with ugly and prickly, yet botanically interesting, things. Forget the gravel and cow skulls and wagonwheels. Our landscapes can be efficient and regionally appropriate even if they contain exotics. But do ascertain that those exotics evolved in places with soils and climate similar to central Texas.

So, let's be right neighborly and say "Howdy Nandinas! Y'all are welcome to stay a spell!"



Jeanette Kelly provided this photo of Karen Dotson, Anita Dawson and Louie McDaniel "working" at the new Trail Garden. (The hand holding the shovel is unidentified.) Looks like some of us missed out on some fun!

Two "New" Great Versatile Ornamental Plants

There are a couple of plants that have appeared on the market locally within the past few years. One is *Angelonia*, which is being called the summer snapdragon. It's easy to understand why, because the blooms look like miniature snapdragons, but the plant can take as much heat as our summers throw at it as long as it's watered adequately. It comes in a variety of colors. It doesn't need deadheading, and seems to bloom nonstop once the weather gets warm. It does slow down

some during the dog days of August, but cutting it back by about 1/3 seems to stimulate it to come back in full bloom, and once a hint of fall is in the air it is happy again.

The other is *Euphorbia 'Diamond Dust.'* The euphorbia family is one of the largest plant families, but this one has the characteristic “milky” sap that all euphorbia have. The nonstop white blooms are very small, but cover the plants. At the nurseries they are usually small in size and sold in small pots, but don’t be fooled. They can grow to be nearly two feet tall. They are striking used alone, but equally so in combination with other plants, especially in containers. When used with other plants they remind me of baby’s breath in floral arrangements.



Angelonia and ‘Diamond Dust’ (flanking periwinkle)



‘Diamond Dust’ with White Wing caladium

Book Review

Pelican Publishing Company, publisher of high-quality books, has generously provided a review copy of *Texas Public Gardens* by Elvin McDonald, c. 2008. McDonald’s lifetime achievements have earned him the nickname Dean of American Garden Editors. Spectacular full-color photos depict more than thirty public gardens in Texas. Kevin Vandivier and Earl Nottingham, both accomplished photographers, were the photo editors. This volume covers gardens accessible to the public from Amarillo to El Paso to Beaumont to Athens to Weatherford and points in between. This would make a splendid coffee table book- it’s oversized- but it would also be a reference source for those of us who travel and want to see all the gardens we can, even those we may never have heard about. I’ll have the book at the next meeting, and if you’d like to take it and examine it to decide if you want to buy a copy for yourself you’re welcome to do so. The photos following are from the book. Each garden featured is also accompanied by text.

If you would like to review a book from time to time, please let me know. I have a couple in the can right now waiting.

Articles for our newsletter are also welcome. My special interest is in ornamental trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses, etc. For balance, material on vegetable gardening, fruit and nut trees, cacti and other succulents, rainwater collection, and composting, to name a few, would be especially appreciated.

