



McLennan County Master Gardener Association
Volume XI Issue 11 • November 2009

PRESIDENT’S LETTER ~ Steven Lovecky

“Water, water, everywhere and not a drop to drink.” Such has been the month of October. After three summer months of hot and dry, for the last two months we seem to be unable to get more than a day between rains to work in the fields or garden. I can guess what the weatherman will conclude and then announce, “The year 2009 has been a year with above normal rainfall.” The grain and forage crop disaster this past year will be all but forgotten as weather statistics are calculated. The cool damp northerly breezes have all but dissipated from memory the repulsive heat we endured just a little over sixty days ago. On September 3, 2009 the temperature in Waco reached 101 degrees, adding to the count of fifty five 100 plus degree days for 2009. That is the fourth most recorded 100 plus degree days in any one year at Waco, Texas. The month of September boasts the fifth wettest September on record. October, even at the time of this writing is the third wettest October on record and at least one more rain event on the horizon. And don’t forget, on April 7, 2009, Waco set a record low of 26 degrees, freezing most of the wheat crop, severely damaging corn, pasture, and fruit crops. As I consider the extreme weather conditions experienced this past year I wonder how anyone in agriculture is able to survive to produce another year.

Enough complaining! Optimism drives us on. Next year will be better. Certainly another awful year will not repeat itself and 2009 will be just one of those years we refer to as “a year to remember” or “one I would like to

forget.” Across the state of Texas the rains of this fall will set the stage for a bountiful recovery. Trees, shrubs, and other perennials are amassing copious amounts of carbohydrates that will jumpstart the organic machine cloaked within their being. Bluebonnets and thousands of other grasses and forbs are filling in the blanks created by the summer drought and armyworm invasion. Lakes, ponds, and rivers equally full to the brim, confidently wave reassurance of an abundant supply of water for the next twelve months. The unusually persistent rainy periods will prime the recharge pumps for the thousands of miles of aquifers across the state. Indeed, this country may be on the verge of an agricultural recovery unprecedented during the first decade of the 21st century. “For the soil beneath our feet will bring forth a bounty not seen by this generation” OK, so I am getting a little carried away here, but I sure feel a lot better now. Optimism brings about confidence and confidence produces activity and activity provides the means by which we reach our objectives. Start now and set attainable goals for 2010. Strategic planning is great for any area of life, but as a Master Gardener the fall is time to prepare the stage for the next growing season. The past year is still revealing its successes and failures, yielding information and experience to adjust next year’s objectives. A sense of confidence should stimulate your mind as you formulate a plan that will reward you with a beautiful and productive adventure into the incredible world around you.

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

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PROGRAM PREVIEW

The November program will be on the 11th at noon at the arboretum. Steven Lovecky will present the program "As the water is, so then shall be the soil." He will discuss how everything that is added to soil, including water, affects the pH of the soil. (This fellow is testing his soil the old-fashioned way. There are more scientific and accurate methods today.)



ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2010 WILL BE HELD AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING

Nominees:

President: Jan Serface
Vice-President: Louie McDaniel
Secretary: Nelda Cooper
Treasurer: Irene Dauphin

October Roll Call

James Bays, Bonnie Belanger, Dick Belanger, Grady Bonner, Ila Jean Carothers, Nelda Cooper, Susan Crawford, Jean Cunningham, Irene Dauphin, Kim Dougherty, Sarah Downs, Victor DuPart, Eva FitzGerald, Melody Fitzgerald, Kris Ford, Jene Hering, Maureen Holy, Jeanette Kelly, Julia Khoury, Steven Lovecky, Louie McDaniel, Elizabeth Milam, Gerry Milnor, Andrea Moore, Georgia Peterson, Ernie Petru, James Prause, Art Reinking, Carol Reinking, Sharon Richardson, Laurie Sappington, Judy Schmeltekopf, Jan Serface, Della Setser, Gale Storey, Mary Lou Trice, Judy Tye, Barbara Vance, Jo Von Rosenberg, Melba Waldrop, Sonia Warriner, Carol Wood.
Interns: Cindy Geletzke, Terry Irvine, Missy Kinder.

MINUTES FROM OCTOBER MEETING

The McLennan County Master Gardeners met Oct. 14, 2009 at noon at the arboretum. President Steven Lovecky called the meeting to order. The September minutes were approved as written in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report: Louie McDaniel reported an ending balance of \$11,547.33 as of Sept. 30, 2009.

Business: James Prause was welcomed as the newest member. Congratulations, James on completing your volunteer and education hours.

Projects and Committees: Jeanette Kelly reported that a pond workday will be held at the arboretum on Oct. 26 and 27th to clean and install a new pump. Cedar Ridge Elementary had a very good first day in the garden on Sept. 24. The next workday will be Oct. 29 @ 8:30 and the next day in the garden is scheduled for Oct. 30 from 8:30-2:45. November 17 & 18 will be the next workday and gardening day with the children. A JMG program has been started at Cedar Ridge by the science teacher. The next Garden Day at Midway Elementary Green Classroom will be Oct. 30. Call Kim Dougherty to help. Members may get cuttings from the Earth-kind Rose Demonstration Garden at TSTC on Oct. 19 at 9 am. The Children's Garden Fair is Sun., Oct. 18 from 3-5 at the arboretum.

Announcements: Sharon Richardson reported that plans for the 2010 intern classes are progressing well. A great line-up of speakers has been selected. Steven Lovecky will present the program next month on November 11 at noon. The program will be "As the water is, so then shall be the soil". Steven will talk about what the PH is of what you put into the soil. Jene Hering announced nominees for officers for 2010. President: Jan Serface, Vice President: Louie McDaniel, Secretary: Nelda Cooper, Treasurer: Irene Dauphin.

Ila Jean Carothers announced that she has a lot of large pots at her home. Please contact Ila Jean if you need some. They are 1 gallon and larger. Georgia Peterson announced that the 2010 intern class and MG members will take a field trip to the Earth-Kind gardens in Addison and Farmer's Branch on Sept. 22, 2010.

The meeting was adjourned. The program was then presented by Tim Castiglia of Tim's Greenhouse.

President Steven Lovecky presenting the Master Gardener certificate to our latest full member, James Prause.

Congratulations, James.



November Activities and Volunteer Opportunities

Nov. 7, @ 9:00.....Superstar Bed work morning

Nov. 14...Docent Tour of CBA (morning)

Nov. 16, @ 9:00:...Cedar Ridge (prep morning) for Day in the Garden

Nov. 17, @ 8:15- 2:30...Cedar Ridge "Day in the Garden"

Nov. 20, @ 8:00-2:30..WWE "Gardening Day" with the Children

YOU BELONG IN TEXAS... .. INVASIVE SPECIES DO NOT!

If you are reading this column, you belong in Texas, and we are delighted that you are choosing to enjoy our proud and longstanding hunting and fishing traditions.

Regrettably, Texas is plagued by things that do not belong here, from animals like ecologically destructive feral hogs and imported red fire ants to invasive plants like lake-smothering giant salvinia and water hyacinth. Invasive exotic species pose a severe threat to native fish and wildlife, and therefore to hunting, fishing, boating, and other outdoor experiences.

Terrestrial invasive plants like Chinese tallow, K-R bluestem, and buffelgrass out-compete and displace native plants that are vital for wildlife, particularly grassland birds. Aquatic plants like water hyacinth, giant salvinia, and hydrilla can impair water quality and shade out or displace beneficial native vegetation in our lakes. If left unchecked, they can also block recreational access to public waters.

Please know that your Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is acting. With our partners, we helped fund the website www.texasinvasives.org to educate Texans. We are actively controlling invasives in our wildlife management areas and state parks and launching educational efforts to inform anglers and boaters. The Texas Legislature recently allocated \$1.5 million to help manage invasive species at places like Caddo Lake and Lake Conroe.

You can be a part of the solution. Get informed. Learn to identify invasive species on land and in water. Don't transport stowaways like giant salvinia on your boat or trailer. Plant native plants around your house or ranch. Every little bit helps when it comes to our native heritage.

Thanks for caring about Texas wild things and places. Here's wishing you a great 2009-2010 season.

Carter Smith
Executive Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Many thanks to Eva FitzGerald for suggesting the above article by Carter Smith and for obtaining permission for its reproduction here from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

I'd like also to thank Sonia Warriner for going to the Extension Office each month and duplicating the paper copies of *The Latest Dirt*, folding them, affixing the postage and getting them in the mail. I wish my work habits were such that she had a longer time frame in which to get this done, but she hasn't complained, at least not yet. She's very gracious about it.

Many of you know that on November 7 the Dallas Arboretum will offer free admission to any Master Gardener (and one guest) who presents his membership card. If you plan to go, please verify this information first at the arboretum website or give them a call.

One last thing- when I was proofreading Steven's column, and came to the word **forbs**, I read and reread the sentence trying to figure out what word he had misspelled. A Google search soon informed me that a **forb** is "a broad-leaved herb other than a grass, especially one growing in a field, prairie, or meadow." (It gave the sunflower as an example.) I got excited about learning a new term- now, remembering it will be a different story. But it brought home to me that while we bring in very knowledgeable experts from time to time, there's a large pool of collective information just among our group, who are learning more and more all the time.

-JMS