



McLennan County Master Gardener Association  
Volume XI Issue 2

February 2009

## President's Column

Hot and cold describes the weather we have witnessed this winter season. I just wish it would be one or the other. Ok, actually I wish it would be warm. I know the natural order of things prescribes freezing temperatures this time of the year, and the benefits of the winter rest seem to bring balance to the seasons to come. Yet, from the days of my childhood I have always looked forward to the coming of spring. Even now as the north wind brings shivers to the back of my head, I notice swollen buds on trees and shrubs already committed to burst out with new growth as the sun's clock ticks on. A plethora of bluebonnets are nestled close to the ground developing roots which will fuel waves of blue for us to enjoy come March. Signs of spring are all around us if we just slow down enough to notice. A balance of sun and rain is all that is needed to initiate the display of nature we eagerly anticipate.

Spring fever is not unique to me. Each of us looks forward to the next growing season and the urge to smell freshly tilled dirt is ever present. Soon the miracle of germination will push new life in all directions, pursuing the energy

flowing from the sun and drawing out the water and nutrients captured within the soil. Years ago an elderly gentleman asked me why I enjoy farming. I told him I like to grow things. Immediately he corrected me and said; "No, you like to watch things grow." While you watch things grow don't forget to share your experiences and knowledge with others. Remember the age old saying; "You can give a squash to a neighbor and feed him for a day, but if you teach him how to grow zucchini he can feed the world."

Finally, don't forget to add compost.

-Steven Lovecky

## Program Preview

The February program, "Getting Ready for Spring," will be given by Melody Fitzgerald.

-Jan Serface

## Calling All Aprons

We have some nice aprons that are handy for public events, such as the Plant Sale. These aprons should be stored in our file cabinet at the Extension Office. However, only one

apron is there now. If you have an apron, please return it--CLEAN--to the Extension Office.

-Thanks, Barbara Vance

## January Meeting Attendance

Jane Anderson, Sandy Back, Grady Bonner, Linda Buckner, Ila Jean Carothers, Nelda Cooper, Susan Crawford, Jean Cunningham, Kim Dougherty, Victor DuPart, Eva FitzGerald, Melody, Fitzgerald, Brenda Golubski, Jene Hering, Jeanette Kelly, Steven Lovecky, Louie McDaniel, Barbara Mersinger, Andrea Moore, Maureen Moulden, Georgia Peterson, Ernie Petru, Sherry Prather, Doug Quicksall, Mark Reese, Art Reinking, Carol Reinking, Sharon Richardson, Judy Schmeltekopf, Dawn Segrest, Jan Serface, Della Setser, Gale Storey, Judy Tye, Barbara Vance, Melba Waldrop, Dorthy Whitehead, MJ Whitehead.

Interns:

Irene Dauphin, Cindy Geletzke, Donna Lindsey, Elizabeth Milam, Gerry Milnor, Anne Plasek, Edrena Smith, James Storrs, Sherri Street, Mary Lou Trice, Sonia Warriner.

-Nelda Cooper, Secretary

## Minutes, January 2009

McLennan Co. Master Gardener Minutes- Jan. 14, 2009.

The noon meeting was called to order by President Steven Lovecky at the Arboretum. The December minutes were approved as written in the newsletter.

Treasurers' Report:

Treasurer Louie McDaniel reported an ending balance of \$12,651.72 as of Dec. 31, 2008. Louie reminded members that dues

are past due.

Reimbursement forms need to be used for all expenditures.

Business:

Jeanette Kelly gave the projects report. A TX Master Naturalist orientation will be held today at Baylor from 5-6pm.

A new docent program has been approved for the spring. Brenda Golubski will lead this program.

Barbara Vance will chair a committee to put in a new trail garden at the arboretum. Volunteers are needed to begin in February.

Monday, January 19 is MLK Day of Service. Volunteers are needed to help with gardening & clean-up at several area schools.

The annual "Beasts & Blooms" will be April 18 & 19 at the zoo. The master gardeners may have a children's garden and rainwater collection demonstration.

The Gardener's Gathering at the arboretum will be April 25 & 26.

The Blackland Income Growth Conference will be held at the H.O.T. Fairground February 2-3. Master Gardeners will staff an information booth. Registration for the BIG conference is \$15, includes lunch.

Jene Hering discussed plans for "Garden in McGregor". Volunteers are needed. Workdays be on Saturdays.

Announcements:

Steven reminded members that we will receive a 10% discount at participating nurseries. Storm's Nursery discount is for plant starts only.

The 2009 TMGA annual conference will be in Marshall, TX, April 23-25. Those wishing to attend should register now.

New transfer member Maureen Moulden was welcomed.

Intern, Sonia Warriner, also a member of the Herb Society, has cookbooks for sale.

Art Reinking announced that the A&M Landscape Design course will be February 16-17 in College Station.

Ila Jean Carothers reminded members that the annual MG Plant Sale will be May 16.

The business meeting was adjourned. The program was presented by Shane McLellan, Agri-Life Extension Service, on the rights and responsibilities of MG's.

-Jan Serface

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## Doug Welsh Radio Program

Dr. Welsh's radio program is now carried streaming live on Thursdays at 12 noon. [www.kamu](http://www.kamu)



### Officers for 2009

Louie McDaniel, Treasurer; Nelda Cooper, Secretary; Jan Serface, Vice President; Steven Lovecky, President; Barbara Vance, Immediate Past President

### February To-Do's

Mid-February is the time to do necessary pruning for some plants, but don't prune just because your neighbors are roaming their yards with hedge clippers, loppers, saws and the like. Many shrubs are best left alone IF they were planted in the right place with their mature heights and widths in mind. They need only tidying up-removal of dead limbs or limbs that are ungainly or rubbing on others.

Shrub roses generally are cut back 50% around Valentine's Day. The older growth is removed, and cuts are made just above an outward-facing node so the plant will develop outward and allow for better air circulation. Climbing

roses, on the other hand, are pruned after the flush of blooms in late spring or early summer. If pruned too early, all the blooms for the current year are lost.

Nandinas, particularly the standard 'domestica,' tend to lose their lower leaves over the years, and eventually



end up with bare canes except for

leaves (and, in the winter, berries) only at the very top. By this time they aren't much to look at, but they can be rejuvenated with very little effort, and mid or late February is the time to do it. If the plants are several years old and all are nude of leaves most of the way up the canes, the best thing to do is to cut all the canes off CLEAR TO THE GROUND. Don't be afraid to do it. By summer new canes will have sprouted that are full of foliage and fresh looking. You'll have nice, full plants and since



To keep them full year after year, take out about 1/3 of the canes every February. Choose the oldest and tallest ones for removal. Never leave stubs. Cut clear to the ground. This way you will always have new canes replacing old ones.

Do you have any of the wonderful old-fashioned glossy abelias? These were



they already have a good root system they will be showy within a short time. Nandinas do most of their growing in the early spring, though, so don't put off this job too long.

Across and above is what you DON'T want to do when you prune. The lower canes will never produce any foliage, and puny branches will form at the top. Any cane that is pruned should be removed completely to the ground.



mainstay shrubs in the early and mid-twentieth century. Like nandinas, once established, they are practically impervious to drought, although the leaves are a prettier green if they get shade sometime during the day. These have the same habit as nandinas in that the older stems lose their leaves and the only foliage and flowers are at the very top. Have you already guessed how to make these full and pretty again? Think brutal. Take off *all* the growth clear down to the ground. Do this in the late winter or early spring, too. You will love your “new” abelias.



And speaking of pruning, most of us are aware of the phenomenon known as “**Crape Murder**.” Please spread the word that crape myrtles should be LET ALONE except for the removal of dead limbs or limbs that are rubbing against each other.

There is absolutely no valid reason to mutilate a crape myrtle in this way unless it is to provide work for yard crews:



Follow this link to an amusing and informative article by Greg Grant on the proper maintenance of these “lilacs of the South.”

<http://plantanswers.tamu.edu/publications/stopthecrape.html>

And speaking of pruning, it’s hard to imagine the reason for this chop job. The plant isn’t under a power line or any other obstruction above. Maybe it is too near the curb and the homeowner felt it was getting too large and would spread out into the street?



## It's Time to Order Your Caladium Bulbs!



Center: Florida Sweetheart; Clockwise from left: White Wing, Gingerland, Carolyn Whorton, Red Flash

It's time to order your caladium bulbs, although they are best planted around May 1 all the way up to June 15. (There's no need to hurry getting them potted or in the ground, because they have a "timer" mechanism that causes them to go dormant after a set number of days, so if you plant later than May 1 your display will last longer into the fall.) Mail order is the best bet because at the box stores bulbs get mixed into the wrong bins. One fantastic mail order source is [happinessfarms.com](http://happinessfarms.com) If you order early you are much more likely to get the varieties you want before they are sold out.

Caladiums were once thought of as shade plants, but newer cultivars can tolerate some sun, and some can even take full sun **if** they are watered plentifully. This means twice a day in the worst of the heat. If caladiums get too dry, they begin to go dormant and nothing can reverse the process. It only takes one time. Various websites can advise you on the light requirements for various cultivars. Some that can take a good bit of sun are Aaron, Florida Sweetheart, Red Flash, Gingerland, Miss Muffet, Elise, and Fire Chief. The lance (or strap) leaf varieties have an interesting leaf shape, and tend to be more sun-tolerant than the larger ones.

The most exciting new cultivar is Florida Moonglow- the whitest caladium so far. However, it requires full or mostly shade.

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