



# ECHO

## Extension's Community Horticultural Outreach

July - August 2005

Hello My Friends,

The past couple of months have certainly been a time of traveling for me. Recently, I was able to attend the Association of International Agriculture and Extension Educators conference in San Antonio, Texas. This conference was very educational, and I met folks from as far away as Ireland and Thailand. The exchange of information and ideas from agriculture educators around the world was outstanding. The Texas Extension Horticulture Agents and Specialists met in Galveston for a two-day planning and training meeting. Our State has roughly twenty Extension Horticulture Agents and about ten Extension Horticulture Specialists, and we have begun to meet annually to plan for the future as a group. This meeting was insightful, and I received some good grist for my mill. Today, I write to you from the Texas Panhandle. A few horticulturists have gathered here this week to offer an ornamental horticulture training course for Agriculture Extension Agents in this part of Texas. In counties where there are no Horticulture Agents, the Agriculture Agents handle clientele questions ranging from cows and plows to turf and trees.



Educational programs of Texas Cooperative Extension are open to all individuals without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

Writing about traveling to conferences brings to mind the next Texas Master Gardener State Conference that will be held in College Station, May 4-6, 2006. It is not too early to hold these dates on your calendar, and this is an event that you will not want to miss. This will be the first time back to College Station since 2000. They have already made arrangements to host a reception at the George Bush Library, and Doug Welsh is currently taking any suggestions for speakers at the conference as they conduct a national search.

Master Gardeners, keep on keeping on!

Landry Lockett, CEA-Horticulture,  
Texas Cooperative Extension

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## Designing with Color

By Beth DiGioia

One of the lectures I attended at the State Convention was Designing Color in the Landscape, by Diane Land. In a casual conversation with Mary Nell Jackson, I was informed that Diane Land was a Collin County Master Gardener who graduated in the first class (with Mary Nell and Edith Hiett) in 1997. Oh, how I wish she had stayed!

Ms. Land is now a Denton County Master Gardener, with a beautiful property on Lake Lewisville. With the help of her color wheel, she has created stunning borders using natural color harmonies: monochromatic (one color of various shades), complimentary (colors lying opposite each other on the Color Wheel), and analogous (using three colors next to each other).

Unlike professional artists, Ms. Land considers the terms tints (the addition of white) and shades (the addition of black) to be interchangeable. She feels tones (the addition of gray) are difficult to mix and doesn't recommend the use of these colors for the novice.

Most of us have discovered by trial and error that light colors advance and dark colors recede, and this knowledge can create light/shadow and create depth within the garden. She also highlighted some specific colors. White is especially effective by the front door and will lighten dark areas. Red should be used sparingly (blue-reds are easier to work with than orange-reds). Silver and gray are wonderful transitions between difficult colors.

Massing one color is dramatic and leads the eye to a particular destination. Use your imagination when introducing color into the garden. Of course, pots and containers, but also consider chairs, stones, tiles and bricks. Pay attention to the details.

To avoid a boring border, vary height, texture and form. Vertical elements are easily created by careful placement of interesting tree bark, plant supports, whimsy and pillars.

Finally, she encouraged us to remember that color is personal. Our gardens are our refuge, design it the way you will enjoy it!

## Can We Talk?

By Renee Mahoney

It seems that after many weeks of requesting master gardeners to volunteer to cover the help desk phone line we would or should have filled the calendar with volunteers. We didn't. I would like to try and dispel some of the myths about the help desk phone line. The office is no longer cramped and overflowing with junk. It has all been cleaned out, put in storage and the furniture has been rearranged so you can actually fit behind the desk. We have streamlined the entries into the phone log book, so all you have to do is enter information one time only and at the end of your shift, highlight the upper right box with a yellow highlighter if you have not completed it. Believe it or not, there are members out there that look for those open questions as a challenge on their shift to get completed. We have a favorites list on the computer that everyone is adding to, it will bring up weed pictures for identifying, rose sites for care of roses, a turf site for what type of grass will grow here. We are adding to the list daily, but we still have all of the reference books on file and the Aggie website that holds a wealth of information. A new policy in place that clears all of the unanswered questions at the end of the week. Ramiro Ortiz, Charles Boyce, and Marilyn Wooley are on call and if all else fails I will pick everything up on Friday afternoon and answer the questions over the weekend. For those of you that are still saying, "No way, never, ever, ever" here are a few easy ways you can help the Master Gardeners who work at the desk.

- Answer the phone, log in the request and get as much information as you can. This eliminates the need for a call back and work on finding the answer can start sooner.
- Listen to the answering machine, take down all the information you can so that it's ready for the next person.
- For the callers that just want information mailed to them, you can research the answer, type it up and mail it.

Are you starting to get my drift? Any and all help would be greatly appreciated, so if you have not been to the office in awhile, come check it out; you may be surprised that it is a lot easier than you remember. The shifts are from 9am to 12pm and 1pm to 4pm, Monday through Friday. I have the calendar at home over the weekends my phone number is (972)838-4210 and Sheila has the calendar Monday through Friday (972)548-4232. We are waiting to hear from you!

**PLANT IN THE SPOTLIGHT:****Salvia guaranitica****By Candace Fountoulakis**

What's big, bold and blue all over? *Salvia guaranitica*, of course. Easy to transplant, this dark beauty stands tall in the garden, large dark green leaves glossy and healthy. Everything about this sage is big; the flowers, the leaves and its appetite for space! They don't call it "Giant Sage" without reason. Give it some room or it will make room for itself, but unneeded volunteers are easy to remove and pass along to anyone who needs a stunning plant.



*Salvia guaranitica*

Can you ever have too many dark blue flowers? I have had little success with the traditional English garden species in that color range, such as campanulas or delphiniums. Bluntly, they are wimps in North Texas and don't last long when faced with our long hot summers and heavy soils. Giant sage will blow your socks off with its deep, rich color and vigorous constitution. Find some and get it going in your garden now. It won't be long before you'll be rewarded with a plant you can love without working overtime to keep it happy.

**2006 Texas Master Gardener Conference Announcement**

The Brazos County Master Gardeners, Charla Anthony (MG Coordinator/Horticulturist), and I will host the 2006 Texas Master Gardener Conference on May 4-6, 2006 at Texas A&M University, College Station.

Reed Arena is secured for the conference. A&M Buses are reserved for tour transportation. Registration services will be on-line through A&M Conferences and Short Courses. Parking has been reserved next to Reed Arena. Hotel rooms will be blocked in a several hotels with a range of prices. Lots more details to come.

Not since 2000, has the conference been at A&M. We look forward to hosting the conference and will strive to produce a quality educational event, with a dash of fun and fellowship.

Please put the date on your calendar and share with the Master Gardeners. If you have ideas for speakers you would like to have present at the conference, please let us know.

We are excited about hosting the conference. Denton did a fabulous job and we look forward to doing the same.

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## Dallas' Green Gem: The Nasher Sculpture Center Garden

By Katherine Ponder

The magic beneath – and around and in – Dallas' Nasher Sculpture Center is the green. Not just the money investment involved, which certainly has contributed to the beauty, but the green of the grass, trees, flowers. Every stalk has been placed and primped with care for the exact response by art enthusiasts.

While the true art aficionado appreciates the striking sculpture in the Nasher's outdoor display area, the true gardener appreciates the meticulous landscape. It projects a sense of cool respite, making the sculpture a nice accompaniment in the eyes of a horticultural enthusiast.



### Plant Diversity

There are more than 170 different trees in the acre-and-a-half space downtown. Perhaps the biggest surprise, however, comes in a disclosure by horticultural consultant Dr. Robert Moon. "We used almost all natives," he said. "Selecting the right trees helps minimize spraying and loss, both of which are critical when working around all these sculptures." With the exception of landscape architecture firm Peter Walker & Partners' signature weeping willows, the trees are all native or adapted. The landscape team searched the country to find just the right specimen of their selected varieties. Size, shape, and condition had to be exactly right from the opening of the sculpture center in October 2003.

The exterior of the sculpture center is shaded by burr oak that will grow up to 80 feet tall, and the garden canopy has cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), crepe myrtle, (*Lagerstroemia* hybrids with mildew resistance such as "Muskogee"), eldairca pine and magnolia grandiflora. Shrubs include Nellie R. Stevens holly, dwarf yaupon holly, and vitex creatively trimmed as small trees which are full of purple flower spikes in the heat of the summer.

One of the key points that the garden consultants and two full-time maintenance employees keep in mind is the muting of transitions. Founder Raymond Nasher didn't want big transition periods where the stark or recovering landscape would detract from his art collection. So, Dr. Moon and company selected many evergreens as well as the high-maintenance fescue turf. It is tall fescue, a mix of five varieties including "Biltmore," "Padre," "Titanium," Cayenne" and "Inferno." Some of these are available in the Lesco brand at Lowe's. Be forewarned, however: they need lots of water in the summer, frequent fertilizing and mowing, and reseeding each fall. Fescue typically doesn't appreciate heat. "Ultimately, you need to decide what is worth the extra effort," advised Dr. Moon.

### Flora Employment

Each plant at the Nasher has a specific job to do. First and foremost, the overall job is to highlight the art. Dr. Moon worked to create "enclosures" for each piece of art, with hollies creating individual backdrops for the sculpture pieces. It also mimics Raymond Nasher's own residential yard where his collection was originally housed. The center's boundaries are maintained with the clever use of bamboo which is selectively thinned twice a week to keep the thin shoots out. (Interesting note: According to Moon, bamboo at maturity will be the same thickness as when it emerges from the ground. It does not grow in circumference, only in height.) A water garden fronting the James Turrell "skyspace" features water lily, water iris, winter pansies and summer caladiums, all of which combine to further the psychological cooling effect.

The team also had to make its relatively small space appear larger, so a linear layout creates the illusion of distance. Other considerations were turf that would stand up to both heavy foot traffic and the occasional spilled alcoholic beverage from private functions.



(Continued on page 5)

## **FDA Works to Trace Source of Foodborne Illness in Florida**

**Submitted by Nancy Joslin**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is initiating an investigation to determine the source of several clusters of a gastrointestinal illness known as cyclosporiasis that is associated with fresh basil served in Florida during mid-March through mid-April. Known as a traceback, the investigation will work to locate the source of the contaminated produce.

The Florida Department of Health asked FDA on June 2, 2005, to begin the traceback after results of an epidemiological investigation implicated fresh basil as the source of illness in Florida. The Florida Department of Health has 293 laboratory-confirmed cases in 32 Florida counties during March and April of this year. The outbreak includes several clusters and a large number of sporadic cases.

"FDA is aggressively working with our federal and state partners to determine the source of the contaminated

product and taking appropriate action to protect the public," said Dr. Robert Brackett, Director of the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition.

Cyclosporiasis is caused by the ingestion of the Cyclospora parasite and results in the infection of the small intestine. It causes watery diarrhea with frequent, sometimes explosive, bowel movements. Other symptoms include loss of appetite, substantial weight loss, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low-grade fever and fatigue. Symptoms usually develop about a week after consuming the contaminated food. Cyclospora infection can be treated with appropriate antibiotic therapy. Individuals experiencing these symptoms after consuming basil products are advised to consult their physicians and notify their local health departments.

In order to help reduce the chances of infection from consuming fresh fruit and vegetables, consumers are reminded of the importance of washing all fresh fruit and vegetables, including fresh herbs, under running tap water before eating them.

*(Dallas' Green Gem, Continued from page 4)*

### **Asphalt to Oasis**

As we all know, our North Texas soil a blessing and a curse. To combat the clay and revitalize the former asphalt parking lot, the Nasher team went to work amending the soil with a vengeance. They first added 2 inches of gravel under the entire lot to help with drainage. Then the gravel was topped by compost, soil, and a top dressing of various amendments including tiny fibers to help cushion against the weight of tourists and sculptures. The trees were hardened for more than a year and root pruned often to prepare for their big moves. They were originally set 3 to 3.5 feet above grade in anticipation of all the added soil. Philanthropist Raymond Nasher says his site now has "designer soil" that maintains a lush look.

During the preparation, landscape lighting and irrigation were also installed in order to minimize root disturbance after all the plants were put in place. However, since the Nasher rotates its exhibits, new installations and storage of existing ones often take their toll. Dr. Moon has discovered that it is best to have fescue sod on hand to repair the damage and that trees and shrubs often have to be pruned to remove broken branches.

The ultimate result paid off. Visitors often are taken aback by the garden itself, with nearby office workers paying just to come in and enjoy the shade. Garden clubs from as far away as England have come to see the transformation, and as a personal note, I still felt (relatively) cool in the garden last summer on my first visit when I was eight months pregnant. I can't think of anywhere else in Dallas where that would have happened without benefit of cascading water or piped-in air conditioning.

### **Want to see for yourself?**

The Nasher Sculpture Center makes a nice garden excursion even in the summer. And, oh, yes, the sculpture is nice as well. To visit, chart your way to 2001 Flora Street, just off of St. Paul Ave. in Dallas. Admission is \$10 adults, \$7 seniors, \$5 students, and free for members and children under 12. An audio tour of the sculpture is included with the price. Hours are Tuesday – Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursday 11 a.m.-9 p.m. The Center's education center has held one symposium on the garden and plans more in the future. To check for more details, their web site is [nashersculpturecenter.org](http://nashersculpturecenter.org)

## Somewhere Beyond the Blue of Spiderwort

By Nancy Furth

In mid-April I received a surprise invitation to accompany a dear neighbor and gardening friend to see several beautiful gardens near Little Elm on the shores of Lake Lewisville. I was elated to have the chance to revisit these special gardens and both of us had a wonderful time. We now have memories of three lovely spring gardens, bursting with all the best of Texas' spring-blooming plants.

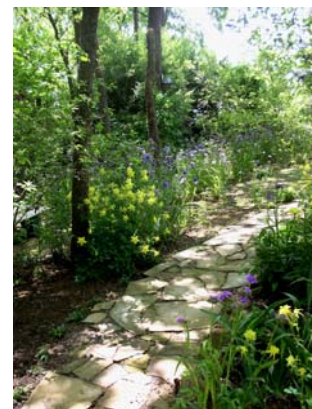


The first, a partially shaded woodland garden, belonged to our hostess who is a special friend and a Denton County Master Gardener. Her husband is a Master Gardener from Dallas County. It had been five or six years since I last visited their home gardens, and they had matured to become even more beautiful through the passage of time. The thoughtfully placed combinations of spring-blooming Texas natives, hardy heirloom plants and both antique and modern roses were breathtaking. The landscape was located in both sun and shade and had an assortment of flowering and evergreen shrubs, specimen trees and large deciduous and evergreen trees. Two spring-blooming specimen trees that complimented the setting were Dogwood and Fringe Tree.

After exploring her gardens, she invited us to tag along and visit two more private gardens just down the road. Although we were about one week ahead of Marie Caillet's spectacular Louisiana Iris display, her lovely country garden was holding a stunning dress rehearsal. The landscape was resplendent with blooms of phlox, columbine, mock orange, spiderwort and more. She was delightful to visit with and, as always, ready to share her gardening wisdom, not to mention surplus starts of Philadelphus (mock orange). Across the road, another of her gardener friends and neighbors, graciously invited us to meander through her cottage garden 'rooms' overlooking the lake and even took time to share her seed collection with us! Some of the best performing plants blooming in mid-April and seen in all three gardens include columbine, iris, coreopsis, blanket flower, verbena, poppies, larkspur, Louisiana phlox and spiderwort.

When we left, my neighbor and I were convinced that this special little enclave was the closest thing we knew to a gardener's paradise. We kept our eyes peeled on the way back down the road joking along the way that we should be looking for a 'for sale' sign or a 'gardener wanted' sign. Oh, for just a shed or lean-to accompanied by a small parcel of land!

This spur-of-the-moment visit just happened (?) to coincide with the development of our new Shade Gardening talk which was due to be presented the following week. Some of the pictures I took that day were perfect enhancements to the program. After seeing these gardens, I doubt anyone would pose the question "What do I grow in the shade?" This tranquil image of a stone path surrounded by clear yellow columbine and beautiful blue spiderwort is my favorite.



Unexpectedly, just two weeks later, a family crisis took my husband Glenn and I to London for a very brief stay. Although I traveled a great deal while living overseas years ago, I never had the opportunity to visit England's public gardens. On this trip I found myself with some time alone and decided to conquer the London Underground and visit a new museum and small garden that had caught my eye in a publication listing London attractions. The Museum of Garden History was founded in 1977 to save the historic former church of St. Mary-at-Lambeth Palace originally dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. After relatively recent restoration work on the present building, the world's first museum of garden history was begun and now offers an extensive collection of exhibits and displays which makes it a wonderful information resource.

As you can see from the accompanying picture, the garden is a peaceful haven with a treasure trove of plants traced back to that period. Although the tulips were just about finished, there were many, many plants to enjoy.

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*(Somewhere Beyond the Blue of Spiderwort, Continued from page 6)*

What originally attracted me to this particular museum is not to be found inside its four walls but outside in the 17<sup>th</sup> century style knot garden. Before I came, I read that the knot garden also held the family tomb of the Tradescant family and that the garden had been named in honor of John Tradescant and his son, John. My knowledge and ability to recall botanical nomenclature is limited, but that doesn't diminish my fascination and curiosity about the history and origin of plants. In this case, my recent garden visit back home, with the vision of the simple yet remarkable sapphire blue spiderwort (*Tradescantia, spp.*) fresh in my mind, fueled my desire to learn more.

Very briefly, both Tradescants mentioned above were responsible for introducing many garden plants during the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is said in "A Guide to the Church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, London" that the elder John Tradescant can truly be said to have founded English gardening as we know it. The plaque at the entry to the garden reads:

John Tradescant and his son, John Tradescant were pre-eminent 17<sup>th</sup> Century gardeners. Their gardening skills and even more, their adventurous spirits led them to North Africa, Russia and America, and to them we owe so many of our plants, shrubs and trees which form the basis of our gardens today.

It was a considerable achievement when one imagines the problem of travel in those early days. They were also gardeners to the first Lord Salisbury at Hatfield House and later to Charles I and Henrietta Maria.

It is recorded that one such plant was *Tradescantia virginiana* which John Tradescant senior received before 1629 from a contact in the developing colonies. The common name "spiderwort" could have come from the plants silky spider web-like sap. The angular leaf arrangement, suggesting a squatting spider, suggests another possible origin for the name. The word "wort" in the name refers to the old English word for "plant".

I walked, took pictures and rested in the small garden most of the morning, identifying each plant in each quadrant of the knot garden, imagining what life must have been like 350 years ago for these adventuresome gardeners.

The saying goes that "curiosity killed the cat", and I won't argue that curiosity can be dangerous. At my age, however, I try to play it safe. Curiosity is such an important aspect of living! We are constantly exploring our world on every level. The desire to find out something, I believe, can ultimately lead to a better quality of life for us all.

Getting away from familiar surroundings and taking vacations gives us the opportunity to explore life rather than simply respond to it. My unexpected travels over the past two months have given me much to be curious about. I hope you, too, have an opportunity to get away from your everyday routine and explore this summer. I know I am going make every effort to continue to nurture my curiosity for the rest of my life.

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*Knot Garden*

*(Somewhere Beyond the Blue of Spiderwort, Continued from page 7)*

As a Master Gardener and lover of horticulture, I don't hold out much hope for discovering any new plants through my explorations, but I can be curious for the pure pleasure it brings in all areas of my life. When I am helping clients and volunteering, I can use the resources and tools already put in place through Extension to find answers. My camera has become one of my favorite personal resources and tools for exploring. That, combined with the computer and my ever-growing library, has afforded me the opportunity to explore and create new resources in the form of power point presentations (the results of my curiosity) to increase or add pleasure to the lives of other gardeners and community groups and hopefully enhance the Master Gardener Program. My hope is that your curiosity about the Speaker's Bureau will grow, but most of all that you will explore and use your own tools and resources, whatever they are, to further the mission of CCMGA.

### ***Epitaph engraved on the Tradescant Tomb:***

*Know, stranger, ere thou pass, beneath this stone  
Lye John Tradescant, grandsire, father, son,  
The last dy'd in his spring, the other two  
Liv'd till they had travell'd Orb and Nature through,  
As by their choice Collections may appear,  
Of what is rare, in land, in sea, in air,  
Whilst they (as Homer's Ilian in a nut)  
A world of wonders in one closes shut,  
These famous Antiquarians that had been  
Both Gardiners to the Rose and Lily Queen,  
Transplanted now themselves, sleep here & when  
Angels shall with their trumpets waken men,  
And fire shall purge the world, these three shall rise  
And change this Garden then for Paradise.*

## **CEMAP Gardening**

**By Mary Means**

With continued volunteer effort the CEMAP Test Gardens now look as lovely as they ever have. Thanks everybody. We will continue to have gardening sessions every Wednesday throughout the summer. Volunteers wishing to arrive earlier than 9:00 AM, because of the summer heat, may do so. Staff person, Rosemary, will be in the gardens by 8:00 a.m. and Arboretum staff person, Denise, will be there by 8:30 a.m. so arrive early if you wish, but come no earlier than 8:00 a.m.

Just like everybody else, Mary Means will be in and out of town all summer. So when you arrive at the gardens for a Wednesday work session, report to Rosemary or Denise for instructions. Denise has agreed to send Mary an e-mail with the count of volunteers who came each Wednesday when Mary is absent. This way, auditing records for the state will be as accurate as possible.

Texas A&M Field Day is September 14, 2005. Dr. Mackay has asked for at least 20 to 25 Collin County Master Gardener volunteers for this event which occurs once every two years. Volunteers will show groups where to park, blow horns, lead people around, hand out ice water, plus other helpful tasks. Most of the work will occur in the morning; in the early afternoon, there will be talks in small groups. No word yet on a free lunch. Watch for more information later.

For further information about CEMAP Gardens, contact Mary Means [mvmeans@swbell.net](mailto:mvmeans@swbell.net) 972-752-4119 972-814-9454.

## Blue-Blooming Vitex and Plumbago: Butterflies Love 'Em, Deer Don't

By Dr. Jerry Parsons, Extension Horticulture Specialist

For indigo blossoms, butterfly habitat and deer resistance, few plants beat Vitex and Plumbago, two adapted bloomers recently added to the Texas Superstar plant program.

Started in 1989, the Texas A&M University Texas Superstar program applies Aggie horticulture smarts to some of our best-known plants. They have been developed and cultured to be even more desirable, marketable and successful for Texas gardens. When you see the Texas Superstar tag, you know the plant's a good bet.

This summer Plumbago and Vitex join this elite group. They're getting their own "star" on the Lone Star state's "plant walk of fame". Plumbago is a tender perennial with profuse blue flowers. It loves the heat, doesn't mind our long, humid summers, and is reasonably drought tolerant. A white-blooming version is less prolific, while blue Plumbago produces flowers non-stop from summer until frost.

Disease-, pest- and deer-resistant, Plumbago is also known as Skyflower because of the sky-blue color of its flowers. It blooms even in considerable shade. While it is native to South Africa, it's well adapted to South Texas conditions and will keep your yard full of butterflies all summer.



*Plumbago*

Plumbago responds well to pruning. It will flower profusely if you cut it back after a growth-flush, since it bears flowers on new wood.

Vitex, our other Superstar, is also known as Texas Lilac

or the Chaste tree. A native of China and India, it actually naturalized throughout North America as early as 1670.

For people living in the warmer parts of the South, the "Lilac Chaste Tree" has been the shrub of choice to mimic beloved lilacs that are restricted to cooler regions. It grows best in full sun and in a location that drains well. Vitex loves the heat, and is so tough that even the Texas Department of Transportation plants it in highway medians.



*Vitex*

Vitex is a spectacular butterfly-attracting plant, hummingbirds love it, and it's deer-resistant, although bucks will brush their antlers on its branches if the plant is allowed to grow large.

So, you're probably wondering, what's not to like about Vitex and why isn't it planted in every yard in town?

That's where the Superstar horticulturists step in. The old Vitex had small spikes of flowers that were pale lilac, mauve, off-white or light pink. The blooms were small and unimpressive. Horticulturists now have identified and tested improved varieties such as 'Montrose Purple', 'LeCompte' and 'Shoal Creek' that have 8- to 12-inch long spikes. These varieties will all be marketed under the name 'Texas Lilac' Vitex.

The bloom spikes on these improved varieties are not only large and beautiful, they're also fragrant and provide long-lasting cut flowers. But once the bloom spikes have provided several weeks of beauty, black and dark-brown seeds result. Not only do these seeds pre-

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(*Vitex and Plumbago, Continued from page 9*)

vent additional bloom spikes, they may, in some regions, produce a mutant seedling population what will not be as glamorous as the parent plants.

What to do? Deadhead, of course. If you want to enjoy the full monty of these spectacular blossoms, you must prune the spent blooms. Diligently. The challenge is that *Vitex* is extremely fast growing. It can grow into a small tree if not cut to the ground yearly.

The seed pods of 'Texas Lilac' *Vitex* must be removed after every bloom cycle-it will be blooming again in less than a month. The entire plant should be cut back to the ground every winter. If you live in an area with a large deer population, the deer will "prune" the *Vitex* plant back to the ground for you as they rub their antlers on the branches. Or, it will certainly be a reminder that you'll need to cut back the ravaged stems.

For those who seek a Superstar medicinal plant, *Vitex* fills the bill. *Vitex agnus castus* belonged in the official group of medicinal plants of antiquity, and is mentioned in the works of Hippocrates, Dioscorides and Theophrast.

Other fun facts about *Vitex* and *Plumbago*: Children often make "earrings" with sticky *Plumbago* flowers-letting them stick to their earlobes. The *Plumbago* bloom produces sticky gland-tipped hairs on the flower calyx. The seed capsule retains the stickiness which presumably helps disperse the seed by attaching to animals. The top of the capsule splits opens and drops the seed out.

*Plumbago* traditionally is used to treat warts, broken bones and wounds. It's also taken as snuff for headaches and as an emetic to dispel bad dreams.

*Vitex* can be found in the writings of Hippocrates from the 4th century BC. He recommended the plant for injuries, inflammation and swelling of the spleen. He also recommended using the leaves in wine to stop hemorrhages and the "passing of afterbirth".

*Vitex* also has astringent properties, and has been recommended for wild animal bites, swelling of the spleen and for dropsy.

The English name for *Vitex agnus castus*, 'chaste tree', is derived from the belief that the plant would suppress libido in women. In Greek cities, festivals in the honor of Demeter included a vow of chastity by the local women.

In Europe, the Catholic Church developed a variation on this theme by placing *Vitex* blossoms at the clothing of novice monks to supposedly suppress their libido. The common name "Monk's Pepper" refers to the medieval belief that utilizing potions made from the berries helped monks maintain their vows of chastity. There is nothing in contemporary scientific literature to suggest that it actually does suppress the libido.

For more information about *Vitex*, *Plumbago* or other Texas Superstar plants, contact Dr. Jerry Parsons, Professor and Horticulture Specialist for the Texas Cooperative Extension Service. His E-mail address is [jerry-parsons@tamu.edu](mailto:jerry-parsons@tamu.edu) or E-mail him through the website, [www.PLANTswers.com](http://www.PLANTswers.com). For images and further information on *Plumbago*, see: [http://www.plantanswers.com/plumbago\\_best.htm](http://www.plantanswers.com/plumbago_best.htm) For images and further information on *Vitex*, see: <http://www.plantanswers.com/vitex.htm>

## Garden Checklist for July-August

**Dr. William C. Welch**

Professor & Landscape Horticulturist

Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

(The following information was compiled from the 2004 information available at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>)

- Caladiums require plenty of water at this time of year if they are to remain lush and active until fall. Fertilize with 21-0-0 at the rate of one-third to one-half pound per 100 square feet of bed area, and water thoroughly.
- Prune out dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning from now until midwinter. Severe pruning at this time will only stimulate tender new growth prior to frost.
- Sow seeds of snapdragons, dianthus, pansies, calendulas, and other cool-season flowers in flats, or in well-prepared areas of the garden, for planting outside during mid-to-late fall.
- Plant bluebonnet and other spring wildflowers. They must germinate in late summer or early fall, develop good root systems, and be ready to grow in spring when the weather warms. Plant seed in well-prepared soil, one-half inch deep, and water thoroughly. + Picking flowers frequently encourages most annuals and perennials to flower even more abundantly.
- It is time to divide spring-flowering perennials, such as iris, Shasta daisy, oxeye, gaillardia, cannas, day lilies, violets, lirioppe, and ajuga.
- Make your selections and place orders for spring-flowering bulbs now so that they will arrive in time for planting in October and November.
- Don't allow plants with green fruit or berries to suffer from lack of moisture.
- A late-summer pruning of rosebushes can be beneficial. Prune out dead canes and any weak, brushy growth. Cut back tall, vigorous bushes to about 30 inches. After pruning, apply fertilizer, and water thoroughly. If a preventive disease-control program has been maintained, your rose bushes should be ready to provide an excellent crop of flowers this fall.
- It is not too late to set out another planting of many warm-season annuals, such as marigolds, zinnias, and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks, but should provide you with color during late September, October, and November.
- Establish a new compost pile to accommodate the fall leaf accumulation.
- June is the time to select daylily varieties as they reach their peak of bloom. + Fertilize roses every 4 to 6 weeks. Apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer immediately after a flush of bloom.
- Continue to spray susceptible roses with a black-spot control such as Funginex every 7 to 10 days.
- Re-blooming salvias, such as *Salvia greggii* and *S. Farinacea*, should be pruned back periodically during the summer. To make the job easier, use hedging shears, and remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below. Fall-blooming perennials, such as Mexican marigold mint (*Tagetes lucida*), chrysanthemums, physostegia, and *Salvia leucantha*, should be pruned in the same manner during the summer to keep them compact, reducing the need for staking. This type of pruning should be completed prior to September 1, since flower buds begin forming about that time.

### Great Job!

*(The following was sent by Mary Nell Jackson to Renee Mahoney after a Parker Garden Club presentation)*

Wanted you to know what a great job Dorothy Ingram did for Parker Garden Club. We both had a laugh as the garden was worthy of an Arboretum, very fancy. Everything she showed on the power point they had in the garden so it was great to tour the gardens afterwards. Be sure to let her know as I don't have her email. Mary Nell Jackson

## **Out and About ...**

### **Activities and Events of Interest**

(The activities and events listed below are not eligible for continuing education or CCMGA Volunteer hours.)

**City of Irving Farmers Market:** The City of Irving's Second Saturday Farmers Market begins June 11 and will run through October. It will be located in the Hwy. 183/O'Connor Road area. They are inviting local gardeners/farmers with excess produce to come and sell it there. If you are interested, you may contact Fran Witte, City of Irving, (972) 742 2296 for details and to reserve a space.

**Dallas Arboretum:** Education opportunities abound at the Arboretum. Check out their Education page for more information: [www.dallasarboretum.org](http://www.dallasarboretum.org)

### **Texas Discovery Gardens at Fair Park:**

Visit the web site: [www.texasdiscoverygardens.org](http://www.texasdiscoverygardens.org) for a listing of all of the special events and activities.

### **Basically Beethoven Festival**

**2:30 - 4pm July 3, 10, 17 & 24**

Free concerts presented by the [Fine Arts Chamber Players](#) inside the air-conditioned comfort of the Grand Hall at Texas Discovery Gardens.

### **Garden Walk: Native Plants of Texas**

**10am Saturday, July 16**

Learn how to have a gorgeous yard even during the hottest months of the year with little or no irrigation. See more than 40 native species of beautiful, low-maintenance, drought-tolerant trees, shrubs, vines and blooming plants. Tina Dombrowski, director of horticulture, will lead the tour and share expert advice on using native plants to add beauty, conserve water and create habitat for butterflies, birds and other native wildlife. *Texas Discovery Gardens members admitted free.*

### **Winged Jewels: Dragonfly Workshop**

**9am - 3:30pm Saturday, July 30**

With names like Flame Skimmer, Hyacinth Glider and Orange Shadowdragon, more than 75 species of these glittering jewels of the entomological world are found in the Dallas area. Learn about the amazing life cycle and daredevil antics of this highly beneficial insect. Conducted by U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist Omar Bocanegra, the workshop will include a walking tour of Texas Discovery Gardens and Fair Park to identify dragonflies and damselflies in flight. **Registration deadline is Monday, July 25.** Texas Discovery Gardens members admitted free; non-members \$15. For more information or to register by phone, call (214) 428-7476.

### **Volunteer Opportunities:**

**Help Line:** The shifts are from 9AM to 12PM and 1PM to 4PM, Monday through Friday. Contact Renee Mahoney at (972)838-4210 on the weekend or Sheila Nelson at (972)548-4232, Monday through Friday.

**CEMAP Gardening:** Every Wednesday throughout the summer meet between 8am and 9am at TAMU—Coit.

## An Update on Insect Repellents

By Michael Merchant, PhD, BCE  
Urban Entomologist  
Texas Cooperative Extension

Need a good insect repellent, but don't like the smell or feel of DEET? This year for the first time, there are choices among effective insect repellents.

At least three new active ingredients have been identified as being nearly as effective as DEET in recent laboratory studies. This prompted the Centers for Disease Control this spring to issue a news release giving their official nod to these new ingredients. This should be good news for people who for any reason dislike using DEET. To learn more, see the latest Insect Update at [http://citybugs.tamu.edu/IntheNews\\_Details.asp?ID\\_Key=420](http://citybugs.tamu.edu/IntheNews_Details.asp?ID_Key=420)

This is a good time to remind all gardeners of the importance of applying a repellent when outdoors in the early morning or evening. These are the times that the mosquito carriers of West Nile virus are most active. With these new repellents, there's no excuse for not using an effective repellent.

P.S. The new Cutter's repellent should be available in Home Depot and some Wal-Mart Stores.

### ***Collin County Master Gardener Kudos!***

*Below is an email from Cindy Wermeske, a Denton County Master Gardener who rode the bus to the Heard. I wanted to pass her email comments on to Collin County and again thank all of the members from the Collin County Master Gardener Association who worked so hard to make this year's conference perfect. Karen (Denton County Master Gardener)*

Peggy and all the Conference Committee:  
Thank you so much for all your hard work. All of you made the conference such a joy to attend and work. Every detail was perfection. I just had to laugh when Brenda handed me the laminated list of emergency phone numbers for contact while we were out on our tour of the Heard- what a great example how everything was planned to the smallest degree!

I listened closely to conversations during the conference and heard nothing but rave reviews. While on our tour we had comments about how nice it was that we included surrounding counties. The McKinney group did an outstanding job of representing their area as host/hostesses. Diane (Sharp), the Master Gardener from McKinney that drove to the Doral just to accompany us on our bus, brought gift bags and gave out prizes for answers to her trivia questions. She kept everyone laughing. Shades of Green was so accommodating and welcomed the group with cold water and a nice area to sit for awhile to hear about the nursery.

There just aren't enough positive adjectives of praise! I hope you are all soaking your tootsies this week.

Regards, Cindy Wermeske

# July 2005

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3	4	5	6	7	8	9 <i>Designing the Garden for the Birds, Butterflies and Bees – 9:00 Parker Garden Club</i>
10	11 <i>Roses– 10:00 McKinney Sr. Ctr.</i>	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 <i>Meeting—11:30 Plant Photography—Heard Museum Laughlin Room</i>	29	30
31						

# August 2005

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6 <i>Shade Gardening—9am Parker Garden Club</i>
7	8 <i>Plant Propagation - 10am McKinney Sr. Ctr.</i>	9 <i>Vermi-Composting - 7pm—Blue Ridge Garden Club</i>  <i>Ornamental Shrubs and Trees-2pm Heritage Ranch Garden Club</i>	10	11	12	13
14	15 <i>Fall Master Gardener Class Begins 8:30 am—3:30 pm, TAMU-Coit.</i>	16	17	18	19	20
21	22 <i>Fall Master Gardener Class 8:30 am—3:30 pm, TAMU-Coit. Fruits and Nuts (AM) and Wildlife Control (PM)</i>	23	24	25 <i>Meeting 11:30—Rainwater Collection—TAMU-Coit</i>	26	27 <i>Frisco Home and Garden Show</i>
28 <i>Frisco Home and Garden Show</i>	29 <i>Fall Master Gardener Class 8:30 am—3:30 pm, TAMU-Coit. Landscape Design (AM) and Color in the Landscape (PM)</i>	30	31			

## This and That

### Upcoming Meeting Information:

Natalie Caudill will present our July 28th meeting. You probably have seen many of her wonderful photos in the Dallas Morning News in the weekend Home & Garden section of Texas Living. She will be showing us how to photograph our gardens at their best! We'll be in the Laughlin room of the Heard Museum at 11:30 am on the 28th.

"Rainwater collection in the home garden" will be our program on August 25th. The Extension agent from Menard County, Billy Kniffen, will share his wonderful ideas on this timely subject. This is a great presentation and everyone will learn how to preserve this great resource. We'll be meeting at the Coit Station Pavilion building at 11:30am, instead of the Whitehurst bldg. as previously mentioned.

### Thanks to ECHO Newsletter contributors:

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