



ECHO



Texas AgriLife's Community Horticultural Outreach

The Urgent Report



There have been many changes on how you and I report over the last couple years. The Collin County Master Gardeners Volunteer hour report has changed from a paper hard copy, to an e-mail, to a spreadsheet. The most recent version is by far the most easy and advanced way to input your volunteer activities and hours.

The new online reporting system at <http://ccmgatx.org/admin> is completely web based through our award winning website. It offers the Master Gardener, Volunteer Hours Administrator, the project leaders, and myself with so many more beneficial tools to communicate and compile what we are all doing around the County. Impressively, we have had about half the membership sign up and start using the system. That's a testimony to how easy it is to use and the great job Janet Kirklen and the website committee has done. I encourage you to take a few minutes to sign up online and start using the system.

So... you might ask, "What's the big deal about reporting anyhow?" The short answer is: "No report, No Collin County Master Gardener program." A better explanation hinges around the fact that the Collin County Master Gardener program is administered by Texas AgriLife Extension Service, a part of the Texas A&M University System. I administer or coordinate the Master Volunteer program in Collin County, just like other County Extension Agents do in other counties. This has always been a requirement of the program and, as of 2010, is formally documented through the new Texas Master Gardener Chartering requirement. As a state agency that is funded through federal, state, and county tax dollars, we have to justify our existence to elected officials at all levels. This is all in the interest of the public because we receive your hard earned tax dollars.

Therefore, the reports that I prepare based on yours and my
(More on 2)

May-June 2010

Educational programs of Texas AgriLife Extension serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.

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Positive, Negative, and Time

By Tony Dennis, CCMGA President



Summer is fast approaching here in North Texas. The problem is we don't know exactly when it will stay. I did learn one thing after being laid off last November ...it's to keep a positive attitude.

So I was positive, and it was spring; on March 21st Mother Nature decided to "squash" that idea with eight inches of snow. Cautiously positive once again, I devised a new plan: I could plant my tomatoes after April 1st. Mother Nature then decided that 30-35 mph winds would be "fun" and caused the tender plants to lay down and sleep a while.

There is balance in almost everything. For every positive a negative: yin/yang; white/black. More positive than negative makes life good. But time has a way of interrupting the scheme of things; time is something most of us do not have a lot of. We do have many ideas on getting more: using "*Daylight saving time*", we "make" time. We attempt to save time by doing the job faster, better, or not at all. We measure time in many different intervals, seconds, minutes, weeks, and even years, but have little control of any of it. We are all allocated only so much time, so use it wisely.

There is another aspect of time to contemplate here and it's one that Greg and I have both addressed recently. Submitting your volunteer hours is becoming more and more essential. The state and counties continue to search for ways to cut funding. Programs appearing unproductive are targeted.

The main contribution of the extension is volunteer time to the communities. The single way we can benefit from the volunteering is by reporting the time and having it recorded in Greg's monthly report. **Please take the time to make time to enter your time on time (that is a lot of times).** 🌸

The Urgent Report

(Continued from Page 1)

efforts help to communicate all the hard work that we put into our overarching mission to improve the lives of Texans through research based horticulture information. It serves to show elected officials that the Extension Service is effectively utilizing the funding that is provided from tax dollars.

The slow economy will affect our agency in the start of the next fiscal year. This week we received word that a reduction in funding at the state level will result in the loss of employees across the state. In addition, the county funding will be reduced, however we're not sure by how much. We hope that these budget reductions don't result in any loss of employment for our friends and co-workers. In these situations it reminds us how important these monthly, quarterly, biannual, annual, county, state, and federal reports are to our agency and the Master Gardener program.

I encourage you, as citizens, to consider contacting your elected officials (federal, state, county) to communicate your support of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Master Gardener Program in Collin County. 🌸

Greg Church,
County Extension Agent

Whistling Past the Cemetery Iris *Rooted In the Past*

by Candace Fountoulakis

You can find inspiration in the most unexpected places. A while back, someone suggested an unusual place to locate hardy and native plants well adapted to our highly variable climate and soils – old cemeteries!

These days, small and family plots are one of my favorite sites to visit for trees and perennials which thrive in North Central Texas with little or no care. Our wildly fluctuating weather this spring has only confirmed that such his-



toric places can be havens for valuable plant life.

Recent visits to Plano's Young Cemetery have found

many such treasures. An unknown daffodil bloomed in late January, *before* the snows, fol-

lowed by ephemeral trout lilies and 'Early Pearl' narcissus surrounded by vast swaths of grape hyacinths carpeting the ground. Madonna lilies growing like weeds are in a rush to catch up.

Rooted In the

Past committee members scattered wildflowers in a sunny area of the property last autumn, but thistles the size of soccer balls ruled one corner, with healthy taproots and plenty of itch-

-inducing spines. The largest had to be removed using a garden fork – forget pulling them up! The preferred wildflowers are thriving in spite of such vigorous competition, with buds of blanket flower soon to open. Pink Evening primrose will put on a nice show this year, but experience tells me the seasons to come will see an explosion of this native bloomer. Blue grama grass seed was also scattered to provide a short grass prairie sampler.

Beneath the Texas Historical plaque, a fall bulb sale favorite 'Thalia' narcissus blooms in pristine white amid three 'Martha Gonzales' roses and more purple-blue muscari. (That's right - red, white, and blue). Spears of bearded iris foliage fill out the bed and will bloom later. Weaving around the headstones, white "cemetery iris" bloom in thick clusters where planted decades ago, under native trees which tower over the final resting place of pioneers dating from 1847. One aging, gnarly pecan bears witness to the passing of generations as the arching limbs of old American elms shelter dainty pink flowers of Eve's Necklace. All of these historical plants survive and prosper without irrigation or spraying, standing as silent sentinels over the old pioneers. How joy-

ful to see such beauty has remained, even as so many things have changed. I for one will be whistling past the iris, inspired anew. 🌸



About the Author: Specializing in learning about native trees of North Texas, Candace (class of 2002) loves plants, birds, photography and talking about it all. If you ask her a question, be prepared for a 10-minute answer.



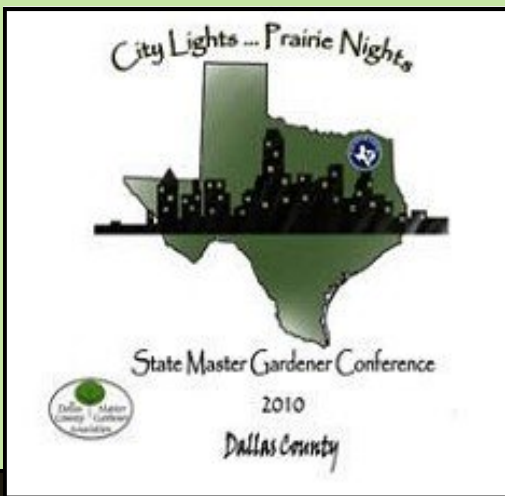
L to R: Carolyn Skei, Mary Means, Mary Beth Moore, and Pat Piaschyk enjoy the State Conference in Dallas. Joan Ehler, (not pictured) also attended.

Texas MG State Conference



Roses used in Norma Babbitt's Antique Rose lecture were grown in her own backyard.

Dallas County Master Gardeners work with school children to make these concrete leaves.



Barbara Lutz, San Antonio, encourages Master Gardeners to attend the State conference in Bexar county in 2012.



(More on page 5)

Annual Conference 2010 in Dallas County

by Mary Means

What a fine conference the Dallas County Master Gardeners put on in April this year. The planning and effort were evident throughout the convention. The Omni Mandalay provided a beautiful setting for the conference. There were never any long lines, and Dallas County volunteers and hotel staff were present to handle any questions or problems. Workshops were fun and informative.

Tim Closs conducted a session entitled **Simple Plant Tissue Culture**. The irony, he said, was that he earned a master's degree on that very topic. Furthermore, when he gives this presentation to groups, it involves two weeks of intense lectures and hands on demonstrations. His students in his laboratory spend an entire semester on the topic. Yet here he was covering the whole subject in one hour. The most important factor in plant tissue culture? Sterilize, sterilize, sterilize.

Texas MG State Conference

Steven Chamblee's **Great Gardening Ideas** comprised an hour of lush photographs from gardens where he has worked beginning with the well-funded Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania. Photos and descriptions of beautiful gardens in Pennsylvania and Texas delighted attendees during the entire session.

Norma Babbitt brought in three large bouquets of roses for her lecture on rooting antique roses. She had picked the flowers a few hours earlier from her own yard. During the course of the lecture, she dismantled the bouquets and distributed the flowers to the listeners so that each could have a rose to practice rooting.

Who in the world would imagine that a funny-shaped pot full of holes would be a good way to grow trees and shrubs in containers? Why would anyone buy a plant in such a thing? Dr. Carl Whitcomb has devoted his life to studying and manipulating root growth. He discussed how roots grow naturally, and how the design of the container affects root growth. Instead of one long taproot that quickly hits the bottom of the pot, with his method of root manipulation, he ends up with a pot full of little roots eager to take up moisture and nutrients.

Representatives from Lake Granbury and Somervell County strolled among the Master Gardeners encouraging everyone to come to the 2011 Annual Conference in Glen Rose. Likewise, representatives from Bexar County encouraged Master Gardeners to come to San Antonio for the 2012 Annual Conference. From city lights to country roads to fiesta times, annual conferences are great fun and they truly increase the enjoyment of being a Master Gardener. 🌻

(See photos of a few of the events on the opposite page.)

You Made The Plant Sale A Winner



By Renee Ferguson

Photos by Jim Ewoldsen and John Worley



Thanks to all who came out and worked on Friday to set up. It was a long day but our volunteers worked tirelessly until the building was ready for the sale the next morning.

We are also very appreciative for the folks who drove to Fort Worth and Carrollton to pick up our orders and deliver them to us. Those trees were a little tall for a suburban, but the drivers managed. We had a full roster of volunteers on Saturday, yet were barely able to handle the onslaught of customers. We started to sell out of many of our plants in the first hour, and the trend continued throughout the day.

To all the volunteers on Saturday, thank you, thank you, and thank you.

There was never a task requested that was not met with a smile and a nod. It is absolutely impossible to pull a feat such as our plant sale off without that kind of dedication.



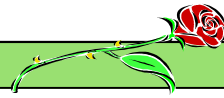
What an awesome plant sale! We again had a very successful sale with more than 5000 plants offered to the public.

There were people lined up to come in by 7:30 that morning as we were still having coffee and donuts. We saw many repeat customers and that is definitely our goal.



The behind the scenes volunteers that worked on signs and other tasks that are essential to the sale running smoothly need to be commended as well. The kids activity area was incredible with about 90 children visiting during the sale. Also to be applauded are the ladies who gave up their morning routines to come out a week before to plant containers. We were able

(More on next page)



to offer 28 beautiful containers this year.

Most of all, thanks to the plant sale committee. Months and months of planning went into the sale, and everyone worked hard to make it all possible. You all make me look good.

Now it's time to start planning the eighth annual plant sale. I'll give you a couple of weeks off.



Renee Ferguson, (Class of 2002), is the Plant Sale project leader and in the process of completing Earthkind specialist training. She loves butterfly and hummingbird gardening.

FIRE ANTS IN THE MOVIES by: Janet Smith



Stay tuned: this summer, *The Discovery Channel* will air an episode on violent encounters with animals or insects in the residential yard.

Would you be surprised to learn that part of the filming for the production was done right here in our own north Texas area?

On April 7, the film crew, along with Kim Schofield, an entomologist from AgriLife who instructs selective Master Gardener classes, excitedly arrived in our yard ready to capture the activity of fire ants in their mounds. At the time it was still a little cool for them to be very active, but with minimum coaxing from Kim, the ants began to put on quite a show. First, Kim stirred around in the mounds. The ants scrambled. And the photographer filmed.

Kim is a natural for the cameras. She educated the crew about the ants' destructive habits and informed them about ongoing fire ant research. Then

she allowed about five dozen to get on her hands and bite and sting her. The photographers are from New York and had never seen a fire ant. After looking

at the results of the fire ants' biting and stinging on Kim's hand, the photographers took careful steps to ensure that they would not become the next victims of the incensed insects.

For us, not only was the fire ant encounter educational viewing, but we found our small roles in the experience were ones of being entertained and we were. We were promised to be notified of the date and time that it will be aired locally. We'll have it in the eMinders for

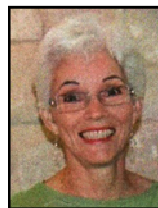
Photo by Mike Jackson



Entomologist Kim Schofield and film crew on location.

you to view.

The film crew left here for their next filming location--alligators and crocodiles in Florida.

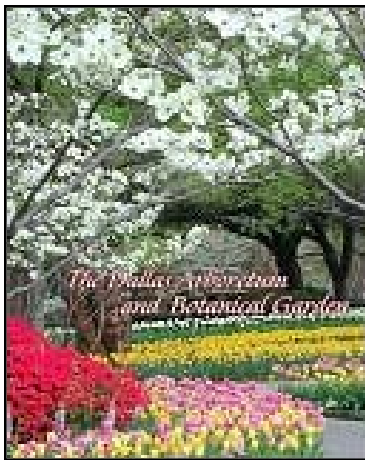


About the author: A retired teacher now an avid gardener, class of 1999, Janet spends time creating native-looking settings. The woodland landscape plantings attract a myriad of wildlife, and Janet is willing to share cuttings. Find her working in the garden or gazing at it while enjoying a cup of tea!

Book Review by Mary Means

The Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden

The invitations were sent. The appointed time arrived. Dignitaries assembled at a large bookstore in Dallas. And thus premiered, after thirty years of customer requests, a book



about the Dallas Arboretum.

In the invitation, this book is described as a coffee table book. But it is more than that. It is a memento of the Arboretum for people to take home

with them after a visit. It's a piece of the Arboretum that they can have with them.

At the sign-in desk were Jimmy Turner, Senior Director of Gardens, and Mary Brinegar, President and CEO. They reported that visitors to the garden have been asking for a book about the Arboretum



for as long as the gardens have been in existence. They were pleased that there is finally a book. They also pointed out that the Arboretum is quite young compared to gardens in other large cities. The Dallas Arboretum is about 30 years old. Large

trees on the grounds make the Arboretum seem older.

The book is an account of the Dallas Arboretum. It begins with a history of the two estates. It also describes the Arboretum today: trial gardens, education. Each section of the garden is described. The book tells who funded each section, who designed it, for whom each area was named, and to whom it is dedicated. The Fern Dell and the Color Garden plus all the other areas of the garden are covered by pages of text and photographs. There is a section on festivals and displays.

No credits are given for the lush photographs in the book. Jimmy and Mary said that all photos were taken by staff members. Credits were not given because officials wanted



Karen Reardon and Mary Means

the book to be about the Arboretum, not about a photographer. Likewise, no credits are given for the text.

Officials wanted the book to be about the Arboretum, not about a writer. Jimmy and Mary did say that most of the text was written by Mary. Some text was also written by Karen Reardon.

The Dallas Arboretum is a lovingly written book with beautiful, plentiful photographs. It is 76 pages long and costs about \$30. The copyright date is 2010, and it is published by Brown Books Publishing Group of Dallas, Texas. One can't read this book without wanting to head straight down to the Arboretum for an informed, enriched stroll through the garden. 🌸



About the Author: Mary Means is a class of 2002 CCMG, contributes the book review and is a delegate to state meetings.

Rescue Me!

By Mary Nell Jackson

It was late spring of 2000 when I met my friend at her families 'get away' lake house in far north Collin County. She had phoned earlier in the week to tell me that she was selling her land to a developer for a golf course/housing development.

Suddenly, I caught my breath; this natural prairie would soon be covered in manicured golf greens, concrete streets and very large homes.

We had discussed the native plants that covered her acreage and she knew I would be one of the first to rescue anything she offered.

As I drove down her country road blue flowers were nodding in the breeze, not a few but fields-full. Some old fashioned names for these beautiful blue flowers were wild or false indigo, indigo weed, rattle weed, and horsefly weed. Some herbalists use this plant's roots for a fabric dye, but it is not the true blue indigo dye plant (*Indigofera*) from the West Indies.

I immediately recognized this perennial herb as *Baptisia australis*. I felt like I was in gardener's heaven; mine for the taking. It wasn't as easy as it looked. The rains had been few that spring and the soil was



-Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower center

compacted clay, almost impossible to dig. Determined, we finally asked for help from a man who had come to repair the tractor. I can only imagine his dismay when he found himself surrounded by two women giving him all sorts of gardening advice; especially to be sure to get all the roots. I later read that the long tap root of this plant can grow to twelve feet or more!

As I pulled into my drive late that afternoon, with my car filled with blue flowers and an incredible amount of soil to protect roots, I willed myself to plant every last plant before the sunset.

I knew the chances of survival were slim since most of the plants we rescued that day were in bloom which is the wrong time to dig and move them. I was racing with the bulldozers scheduled to come after the sale was complete. At least I had saved a few of these natives from the certain death of concrete and instead, given them a place in the garden in which to flourish.

A bicolor variety had been discovered growing in Collin County near Sherman. We discovered a few of that variety on her prairie and gathered seed pods and a few



-Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower center

plants, most had finished their bloom time. I took most of my seeds to the Heard Museum for trials. The seeds never germinated but

I did receive a yellow *Baptisia* (*B. perfoliata*) as an even trade for my seed donation.

(More on next page)

Rescue Me!

(Continued from previous page)

When I read that *Baptisia australis* was Perennial Plant of the year 2010, I was once again reminded of that day of plant rescue. My friend sold and moved from the area and I have never returned to see the eventual housing development. What I do see every spring is my False Indigo pushing through the soil to find the sunshine.

This lovely plant has a genus of 20 or more species. It can be found in dry wood-



-Wildseed Farms

Baptisia australis zones 3-9

lands and grasslands in the east and south United States. The bloom has a sweet pea design with soft gray-green foliage. The blooms top 12 inch spikes of azure-blue blooms followed by puffy 2 ½ inch black seed pods. Plant it in full sun but it will take some shade, if planted in shade it might require staking. It tolerates drought and poor soil but will flourish well in garden soil. It can be propagated by seed or division when dormant. Choose a permanent place in your garden when you plant *Baptisia* as it doesn't like to be moved and may take time to reach bloom stage, a year or two, so that the tap root can develop. The third year you should be able to see a burst of blue blooms.

The plant dies back in winter and totally disappears so mark where you plant it and do not disturb that area. Try planting spring bulbs around the base of your *Baptisia* and catmint 'Walker's Low' or Shasta daisies are good companions. Butterflies and bees are attracted to the blooms of



Another variety of *Baptisia* comes in white such as *Baptisia alba*, zones 4-9.

this plant making it an advantage to include in your garden.

The Perennial Plant Association chooses the plant of the year annually for the plant's beauty. Other attributes include durability; suitability to a wide range of climate types; low maintenance; multiple seasonal interest; and its easy growing nature. If I were to judge I think they picked the perfect choice this year. 🌸



About the Author: Mary Nell Jackson, class of 1997, is a herb lover and discovered her love for writing about the garden a few years ago when she penned an article about gardening in her p.j.'s.

What's Your Perspective? Photography: *Tips and Techniques*

By John Worley

Our photography session continues in this issue with the subject of perspective. For teaching purposes let's pretend this Bur Oak in my backyard is something worthy of being photographed. The trunk fills the same amount of the frame in all three shots while the background is dramatically different. The difference is the distance from me to the tree and the lens focal length used—from wide angle to telephoto.

If the background is distracting you might want to step back and use a telephoto lens. Note the change in the photo on far right in the following three:



Up close—wide angle lens



Normal distance and lens



Far back and telephoto lens



These Christmas Cactus photos are an example of the same effect. The left photo (up close—wide angle lens) shows quite a bit of Santa's village in the back than the right photo (far back - telephoto lens).

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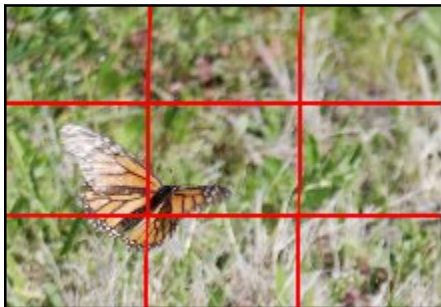


What's Your Perspective?

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The shot of the pampas grass was achieved by standing about 100 feet away and using a telephoto lens to select the carport of the house in the background. While bending down and tilting the camera slightly up, I managed to line up the pampas plumes with the roof line.

The cropped butterfly photo below is placed on the bottom left corner of an imaginary Tic-Tac-Toe board inscribed in the photo. The position allows room for the butterfly to *move* into the photo. I accomplished what I wanted by lining up the cowboy cook's body on one line, looking into the frame, and placing the Dutch oven of peach cobbler at an intersection.



I lined up these wildflower at Colorado's Yankee Boy Basin with the mountain in the background—flowers, tree line, and mountain top sweeping the same direction—up to the right. All intentionally are not centered. The goal is to have the shorter stem nearer the edge to balance the taller stem, just off center. Here relying on the concepts of asymmetrical balance and repetition to provide a pleasing effect and recalling the landscape design principles from Master Gardener class. Finally, the vertical format is chosen to promote a feeling of strength.



In the bee photos on the left, note that if the sky is a lovely shade of blue, shoot up to include it; if the sky is dull gray shoot down to omit it.

We'll look at light quality in the next issue of

ECHO. 🌸



A Production Test Development Engineer in the Telecom field, John (Class of 2009) is an accomplished photographer and vegetable gardener. Other passions are writing and involvement in civic issues. He recently earned title of "Best Civic Activist" in city of residence, Princeton.

Made in the Shade: Grow a Shadow-Happy Garden

By Dawn Oldfield

Nothing is more inviting on a hot summer's day than shade. The sheltering canopy of a tree invokes a more genteel time in the South.

Imagine a comforting break from the sweltering sun under a century-old tree, afternoons spent sipping lemonade or sweet tea, lounging in a hammock, and waiting for a placid Texas breeze to whisper through the leaves.

Daydream over...fast forward to 2010. Many area homeowners find their once little trees the developer planted have matured and are casting shadows across the landscape. Plants that flourished in full sun are now struggling or dying from the lack of it. Grass that was previously green is now sparse, leaving patches of bare dirt. Perhaps a building or other structure is blocking sunlight from your yard. Don't despair! Even in the shadiest location you can grow more than scrubby weeds.

No, you won't be able to talk your roses or zinnias out of being sun worshippers, but if you are lucky enough (yes, lucky) to have the respite of shade you may enjoy not only its coolness, but beautiful flowers and fabulous foliage as well. Don't fight the shade, embrace it! You'll make useful places out of wasted spaces.

Before you start with plants, you have to start with bed prep. It is the most important step of any gardening project. As Master Gardeners we know Collin County residents are faced with heavy clay soil that needs amending. If you don't amend the soil, it doesn't matter how beautiful or expensive the plants are, they won't grow. You need to add compost and/or expanded shale to loosen and feed the soil. Adding at least two inches of mulch after plants are in keeps soil moist and weeds out.



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Caladiums and impatiens are popular shade loving annuals. They are lovely, easy to grow and commonly found. But why settle for the ordinary when you could create something special? There are so many beautiful and unusual varieties of shade loving plants from which to choose. Peruse the CCMGA website or visit your favorite local nursery to find a sampler of shadow-happy plants that flourish in our area.

Annuals, perennials, herbs, and shrubs have a place in the shade garden. The trick is knowing the difference between dappled, light, medium, or dense shade. You also need to be cognizant of the plants preference. Some sun plants are actually happier with a little shade during our hot Texas summers. Sweet potato vine, a popular annual, actually does well in the shade, adding color to a dark, shady spot. Shade loving Elatior begonia features showy flowers in orange, yellow, or red; while painted New Guinea Impatiens has variegated foliage and bright blooms. Vancouver Geranium is noted more for its foliage than flowers, annuals such as Variegated Ginger with its strong lines, and Persian Shield with its purple leaves add color and interest to the area. A friend and local nursery manager recently introduced me to Dutchman's Pipe. It's a winner! This annual

(More on next page)

Made in the Shade: Grow a Shadow-Happy Garden

(Continued from previous page)

vine has heart-shaped leaves and huge flowers! Before the flower opens the bud looks like a giant pinto bean, but soft as a pillow filled with air.

Welcome perennials into your landscape. Once snubbed as “expensive”, savvy gardeners are realizing the economic value of these plants. You spend a little more at the time of purchase, but these plants more than pay for themselves as they return year after year.

Ferns aren't just for woodland gardens. Holly Fern, an evergreen, is probably the most under used fern there is in Texas. Southern Wood Fern is a Texas native, and Autumn perennials to introduce to a shade



garden!

Black Lace Elderberry is a fabulous shrub that resembles a Japanese Maple, with lovely lacy black leaves, and creamy-pink flowers in the Spring...but at about 1/100th of the price.

Until recently, I've never had much shade in my garden, so I was pleased to learn about a couple more stand-outs. Bear's Breeches is a truly unique plant. With Foxglove-like blooms, this evergreen spring bloomer has fern-like leaves. Hellebores, also known as Lenten rose, is a spreading woodland plant

with the prettiest flowers. It blooms in early winter, with flowers ranging in color from green, burgundy, white, and bi-colors. Consider Toad Lily, a fall blooming plant with thick foliage, and speckled orchid-like blooms.



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Often thought of as a sun plant, **Turk's Cap** is one of the best flowering shade perennials. Hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to its turban flowers in red, pink, or white. Another great plant is Coral Bells. There are about 15 different varieties sporting leaves ranging from lime green, purple, to coppery colored. Airy, flowers appear each spring.

Texas Gold Columbine is a Texas native with dainty butter-yellow blooms. This hummingbird attracter flowers in the spring and is drought tolerant. Pineapple Sage is a herb that deserves more attention in the landscape. Hummingbirds love its tubular red flowers, and the leaves truly smell like fresh pineapple. Lamium, also known as Spotted Dead Nettle, has light silvery foliage in tiny orchid-like white or pink blooms.

Trees which shade the house and keep it

(More on next page)

Made in the Shade: Grow a Shadow-Happy Garden

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more comfortable and energy efficient are not making your lawn very happy. Stop struggling to grow grass under trees. A turf that truly thrives in shade does not exist. You could just cover the area with mulch and call it good....boring! Try a ground cover such as **Ajuga** (pictured above), Mondo Grass, or Asian Jasmine for color and texture without the mowing.

With any garden, be water-wise. It is a precious resource that should not be wasted. While many shade-loving plants like a damp home, thankfully you won't have to water often in the shade. Even with restrictions in place, you most likely can hand water as needed. Don't think of it as a chore – it's actually very therapeutic! Check your city website for updated watering guidelines.

A garden should bring joy to you. Revel in your shady retreat where perhaps a bench beckons, offering a welcome resting place to share with a companion or alone with your own thoughts. Enjoy a cool beverage or a good book. Provide a picturesque habitat that attracts lightening bugs, birds, and butterflies. 🌸



About the Author: Dawn Oldfield is a class of 2004 CCMG, our group's public relations coordinator, and is passionate about roses, water conservation, and traveling the gardens of the world.



Always try to grow in your garden some plant or plants out of the ordinary, something your neighbors never attempted.

For you can receive no greater flattery than to have a gardener of equal intelligence stand before your plant and ask, "What is that?"

- Richardson Wright



Garden Checklist for May – June

By Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. The following information was compiled from the 2009 updates available at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/>.

May:

- Now is a good time to create summer containers exhibiting succulents such as echeverias, sedums, or house leeks (*sempervivums*). The larger rosettes of the echeverias and *sempervivums* may be situated in the container with edgings of smaller-leaved sedums. Succulents are easy to re-do and invigorate at almost any time of the year. Trim off the heads leaving about 1" of bare stem below, then situate into a pot in good soil media and press firmly in place. Do not overwater until new growth has become established.
- Cut off old blossoms on spring flowering annuals, such as pansies, snapdragons, stock, and calendulas, to prolong the flowering season.
- Continue to fertilize roses every four to six weeks with small amounts of a balanced fertilizer.
- Allow foliage of spring flowering bulbs to mature and yellow before removing.
- Set out plants of hybrid portulaca (purslane) in sunny areas. Make rooted cuttings of your favorite colors by placing 3 to 4 inch stems in moist, sandy soils.
- It is not too late to sow directly into the soil seeds of sunflower, zinnia, morning glory, portulaca, marigold, cosmos, periwinkles and gourds. Achimenes, cannas, dahlias, and other summer flowering bulbs can also be planted in May.
- Pinch back the terminal growth on newly planted annual and perennial plants. This will result in shorter, more compact, better branched plants with more flowers.
- Plant caladium tubers, petunias, impatiens, begonias, and torenias in prepared shady areas.
- Make cuttings of your favorite chrysanthemums and root them in a mixture of sand and peat moss. Cover cutting box with plastic and place in shaded area for 5 to 6 days to prevent wilting.
- Replace or replenish mulch materials in flower beds and shrub borders to conserve moisture and reduce weed growth.



June:

- Supplemental irrigation is essential for all but the hardiest plants in times of extended drought. Water lawn and garden thoroughly, but not too frequently. As a general rule, soak to a depth of 8 inches. Finish watering by early afternoon, to lessen the chance of disease.
- Check watermelons for ripeness regularly. They are usually ready when the bottom portion is definitely yellow green or even yellow in color.
- Take a critical look at your landscape while at the height of summer development. Make notes of how you think it can be better arranged, plants that need replacement, overgrown plants that need to be removed, and possible activity areas that can be enjoyed by family members.
- Check for insects and diseases. Destroy badly infested plants. Spider mites can be especially troublesome at this time; choose a chemical or organic control or use insecticidal soap.

(More next page)

Garden Checklist *(Continued from following page)*

- Especially during dry summers, soil moisture becomes extremely important and essential for good plant production. Because continual watering is oftentimes costly and time consuming, it pays to conserve the moisture around plants. This is best done by mulching. A good mulch will retain valuable moisture needed for plant growth, and improve overall gardening success.
- Mulches are usually applied 2 to 6 inches deep, depending on the material used. In general, the coarser the material, the deeper the mulch. For example, a 2-inch layer of cottonseed hulls will have about the same mulching effect as 6 inches of oat straw or 4 inches of coastal Bermuda hay.



- There is still time to plant some of the colorful, heat-tolerant summer annuals. Direct-seed zinnias and portulaca, and purchase plants of periwinkle, salvia, marigold, and purslane. Be sure to water transplants as needed until roots become established.
- Removing faded flowers from plants before they set seed will keep them growing and producing flowers. A light application of fertilizer every 4 to 6 weeks will also be helpful.
- House plants can be moved out of doors this month. Sink the pots in a cool, shaded garden bed to prevent them from drying out so quickly; water pots, container plants, and hanging baskets often. Monthly feedings with house plant fertilizer will encourage continued growth.
- Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once the bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every 3 to 4 years.
- 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 a 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. 🌸

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