



ECHO

Extension's Community Horticultural Outreach

NOVEMBER 2003

Dear Friends,

I hope that you have been enjoying this fall weather as much as I have!

I am getting excited about the Holiday Season and I want to encourage you to come to the Master Gardener Graduation Ceremony and Christmas Banquet. This will be a very special time to honor members of our group and celebrate this wonderful time of the year. My high school Economics teacher, Hal Womack, will be speaking to us about the truly important things in life. This man has made a definite impact on my life, and I think you will really enjoy him. I will see you there!

Landry Lockett
CEA-Horticulture
Texas Cooperative Extension



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.



*** Installation of Officers and
Special November Program:
Thursday, November 20th**

**Please join us at Noon for Installation of 2004 Officers, and
12:30 p.m. for Light Refreshments with our invited guests from
the Dallas County Master Gardeners.**

1:00 p.m. — Program by Neil Sperry

***In the Education Bldg. At the Heard**



Focal Point

NANCY FURTH



What a year for butterflies! I have been making unscheduled runs to my alley garden for the past several weeks just to watch the butterflies as they sip nectar and visit the milkweed, mist flowers and asters. A few days ago when I shot this photo, I counted thirteen monarchs at once on this late-blooming aster! The color in this garden is slowly coming to an end, with the blooming of copper canyon daisy marking the grand finale.

It has been an outstanding year for the Collin County Master Gardeners Association, as well. We have steadily progressed through this growing phase in our organization. Those who we welcomed as certified Master Gardeners in the spring have become valued contributors of time and talent to our group. We will do all we can to encourage those about to become certified and our new interns to do the same. Please take time to celebrate all we have accomplished and all the new friends we are making by coming together for our first year-end Graduation and Holiday Fest. We have a delicious pasta buffet planned and a wonderful program, including a special look back at the photographed highlights of our activities.

In closing, thank you all so much for your support during my term as President. It has been an experience I will treasure always. I think you know how much this group means to me, and it all has to do with working together to bring our passion for gardening to the public. The opportunities we have to gain horticulture education, as well as give it, mean even more when they are enhanced by warm and lasting friendships. I know from my personal experience that these are the true rewards and my wish is that all of you enjoy them!

PROJECT LEADER MEETING REMINDER

Thursday, November 13, at 9:30 a.m. at the McKinney Extension Office

The Executive Board of Directors will be meeting with all Project Leaders and those persons who are currently contributing volunteers hours independently to a project without a project leader.

Your attendance is extremely important since the Board will be instituting a new review process and project authorization procedures for 2004 and the future. If you have questions about whether or not you should be attending, please call Landry or an Executive Board member.

Watch for New Collin County
Master Gardener Handbooks
and Directories

We will have new Directories which will include our new Interns and all Collin County Certified Master Gardeners available at our Graduation/Holiday Fest on Thursday, December 6.



**Chief Warrant Officer 3
Jeff Gregg
101st Airborne**

ONE OF AMERICA'S BRAVEST WE SALUTE YOU JEFF!

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeff Gregg is our own Jan Stricklin's son. He is attached to the 159 Aviation Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division. He is the senior Pilot instructor on the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter and has been in the Army for 18 years. He presently is somewhere in Iraq flying everyday. In addition to his normal flying duties he is responsible for advanced flight instruction and proficiency training of the other pilots in his unit.

You are in our prayers!

THINGS TO DO, PLACES TO GO.....

By Helen Snyder

Please confirm all dates and times before you go.

Dallas Arboretum: 214-515-654

December 3: 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. **Herbs of Christmas**
Celebrate the season with a discussion on the herbs of Christmas. \$10.

Fort Worth Botanic Garden: 817-871-7686

November 15 and 22 (2 Saturdays): 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **Faux Stone Troughs**

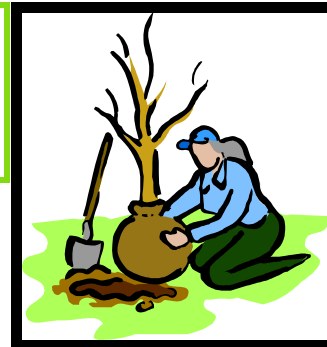
“Create your own lightweight stone garden trough! We take inspiration from merry olde England, replete with those famous ancient, painstakingly-hand-carved water troughs, and add a bit of American ingenuity to create unique faux stone creations in just a few hours! We will construct the troughs in the first class. The second session will be dedicated to detailing the troughs and planting them with botanical wonders. Materials & plants provided. (\$35 supply fee included in tuition).” Steven Chamblee (MS – Longwood GP) instructor: Education Director at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden. Tuition \$80

December 6: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **Holiday Wreath Making** with Steven Chamblee

“The old-fashioned Holiday Wreath Party is a great time to get together with friends and family to make festive wreaths to adorn your home. Fresh mountain greens of fir and spruce form the heart of the wreaths, which you can accents with cones, pods, and other natural decorations to create unique, ready-to hang treasures that are sure to bring cheer to your holidays. Two wreaths per student. \$35 material fee included in the tuition of \$70.

CCMGA Teams-Up To Help On McKinney Make a Difference Day

By: Helen Housley



On Saturday, October 25th, some two hundred volunteers 'rallied' at the Collin County SPCA site to plant 83 trees, landscape an entry island, and establish a nature path. The project was one of many projects through out the City of McKinney as part of the McKinney Make a Difference Day. Citizenship McKinney coordinated this project. Neil Sperry was honorary chair. Deborah Little was the project director for the SPCA. CCMGA assisted on the project by staking the tree locations, tagging the trees, and educating the volunteers on the proper tree planting procedure.

It was pretty amazing to see this barren space turned into a complete landscape design within a matter of a few hours. Hats off to **Landry** for kicking the project off with a presentation to the leadership team at the first planning meeting and coming out on planting day to get involved. Could we ask for a better leader? **Lonna Jochetz** was meticulous, as usual, in preparing the "how to" cards with an 8-step guide to planting a tree and a diagram on the flip side. Prior to the planting day, **Amelia Chappel, Linda Pope, Jan Stricklin, and Helen Housley** helped in spacing, flagging, and tagging. They also, along with Lonna and Landry, trained each 4-6 member volunteer group before they began planting on Saturday.

As always, there were some challenges, but the dedicated Master Gardeners always rose to the occasion. You are never 'out on a limb' by yourself when coordinating a project with these volunteers around. What a special blessing to be part of such a neat group!!! Thanks so much to everyone who volunteered to help.

TEXAS SUPERSTAR™ and EARTHKIND™ ROSE SALE — MARCH 27, 2004

COMMITTEE UPDATE by Candace Fountoulakis

The committee members organizing the Spring Plant sale have been very busy meeting with vendors and getting ready to advertise our sale which has been scheduled for the last Saturday in March, 2004. The sale will focus on the Texas Super Stars and EarthKind Roses, and will be held at the District office in the Pavilion Building on Coit Road. Dr. Steve George has been instrumental in setting us in motion for this important fundraiser for our organization. The committee members will meet in mid-November to assign specific tasks as we start to gather materials, make designs for advertising and date of sale signage and other important functions. The committee will be in dire need of sale-day volunteers to help move plants, direct customers, write tickets, act as cashiers and other numerous but important tasks. We may be calling upon every Collin County Master Gardener to assist us on that one day in March. Updates will be given as specific goals are met in our march toward the SuperStars Sale. If you would like to help plan this event, please contact Candace Fountoulakis and we will put you to work!



EDITOR'S REMINDERS and TIPS:

- Please don't forget to turn in your Master Gardener Survey to Landry by November 17th! This will really help him as he plans for the coming year. If you did not receive one, please email or call Landry or Nancy.
- There are just two Master Gardener Training classes left! Tomorrow, November 11th, Dottie Woodson will be instructing and next week, Nov. 18th, we will hear Dr. Cynthia McKenney. Please make time, if you can, to stop by. It's a great opportunity to learn from the best.
- If you aren't busy on Wednesday, take the opportunity to help out at the CEMAP gardens. CEMAP Gardening. Wednesday, November 12, 2003, 9:00 AM
TX A&M on Coit
gather at the gazebo in the back
Main activity: transplant 4" pansies into flower beds
Bring: knee pads, gloves, trowel
-
- Texas Master Gardeners License Plates are now available. One would make an excellent gift this Holiday!
- **JoAnn Huff** is in charge of our Cookbook fundraiser. She has an endless supply of recipe forms, so make sure you contribute. . .many times!
- Our Arboretum Trip is open to all. Please call or email Nancy if you have any questions.
- We are expecting many Dallas County Master Gardeners to attend our November Program. If you can bring a finger food to share, it would be most appreciated. 😊

TIPS:

- Aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu has a wonderful supply of useful information for the new as well as the seasoned Master Gardener. I always review new information in The Southern Garden, especially under Horticulture Update. Under Programs, Dr. Bill Welch lists the upcoming Landscape Design Study Course. These courses are very popular with Master Gardeners along with the Oktober Gartenfest which two of our members, Mary Nugent and Amanda Hatfield just attended.
- Neil Sperry's Garden Webletter is a weekly treat for me and a good resource. I use it as one of many tools to keep in touch with the general public's perspective on landscaping and gardening problems and to check out the plant profiles that are given by Jimmy Turner of the Dallas Arboretum. For instance, this week's issue brought to the forefront two great vertical growers we as Master Gardeners should know about. A shared letter from Steven Chamblee of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden left me in tears . . .heathly, soulfelt tears! Check it out, the webletter is free.
- Now is the time to pick up an extra calendar or set aside one you have received in the mail from a realtor for strickly Master Gardener Business. This is the best way to keep track of those volunteer hours—how and when they accumulated. Also write down our meeting times and put a big star on that final week of each month so you don't forget to send the hours you've recorded to Diane Sharp.

November-December 2003

Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

Expanded Shale - A new Possibility for Amending Clay Soils

by Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist, Texas A&M University

A form of expanded shale is now available to gardeners that will be useful in loosening tight clay soils and making them more workable.

'Blue Shale' from the Midway Shale formation is present in a pattern across Texas through Corsicana to Texarkana and stopping near Laredo. It is usually found 10-15 feet underground. It was formed during Cretaceous times when Texas was a large lakebed and the lakebed sediments solidified under pressure into the present-day shale formation.

Jack Sinclair of TXI Industries has explained that the shale is mined and ground to 1" to 1/2" range particles and then kiln fired. As it progresses through the kiln for 40 minutes at 2,000 degrees C, certain chemical processes take place in the silica content (60-70%) causing the material to expand. The expansion of Kitty Litter (calcined clay), for example, occurs at only 800-900 degrees.

As the material cools, cavities are left after gases escape, leaving a porous lightweight chunk capable of absorbing water and releasing it slowly at a later time.

Recommendations for using expanded shale with containerized plants call for putting one-third of the material in the bottom, then mixing the expanded shale with potting soil 50-50 for the rest of the pot. For flower beds with sticky or gumbo-type soil, Dr. Steve George of the Texas Cooperative Extension recommends putting down 3 inches of expanded shale on top of the area, and tilling it in six to eight inches deep. Also add 3 inches of finished, plant-based compost as well, which results in a 6-inch raised bed. Crown the bed to further improve water drainage.

Dr. George also remarked:

"Based on a two-year research study and six years of field trials, I feel that expanded shale will open up and aerate heavy, sticky clay soils faster than any material that I have ever tested. Due to its porous nature, it provides aeration from within the shale particles and, in poorly aerated clay soils, resulted in a more extensive and healthier root system than did other treatments being tested....Even though I dearly love finished, plant-based compost, if I were limited to only one application of one soil amendment with which to open up heavy clay soils, I would take expanded shale and never look back!"

Several trials are underway at the present time to test the long-term effects of using expanded shale. Last June Dr. Frank Allen and the city of Duncanville laid out perennial flower beds in black gumbo and the city of Carrollton (situated on Blackland Prairie soils) is working on field trials with Dr. Steve George. Trials include working with black gumbo only, lava sand with gumbo, compost with Blackland soil, and compost and expanded shale in existing soil. It is anticipated that the lightweight material might create a permanent physical change in the blackland soil (or, according to Dr. George, last at least 10 years as a conservative estimate).

The amendment is now sold by the TXI Corporation under the brand name 'Tru-Grow.' It may be purchased in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, and Navasota areas. Check with local garden centers and suppliers for availability in your area.



Congratulations!

**COLLIN COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS
Fall Graduating Class of 2003**

Lynn Applegate
Scherle Barth
Paula Brehm
Vicki Burk
Amelia Chappel
Marvin Dietel
Wanda Dietel
Gordana Djumic
Renee Ferguson
Candace Fountoulakis
Kristi Guzinski
Sarah P. Hester
Helen Housley
Lonna Jochetz
Nancy Joslin
Kristen Kerwin
Karen Lai
Cheryl Lehnertz
Linda Levak
Jan Madden
Marleen McCage
Mary Means
Dorith Molnar
Maria Pedde
Cathy Phillips
Linda Pope
Helen Snyder
Jan Stricklin
Judy Toole
Debbie Tschetter
Priscila Velasco
Beverly Vickers
Cheryl Vines

Warm Pear-Pecan Salad

From the kitchen of: Diane Poston

Preparation time:

Recipe Source: ArcMax Gardening

Number of servings: 2

This seasonal treat is my favorite salad of all time.

Ingredients

1 teaspoon butter
1 Anjou or Bartlett pear, cored and thinly sliced
3 tablespoons pecans, coarsely chopped
1 tablespoon brown sugar
2 tablespoons plain yogurt
2 tablespoons reduced-fat mayonnaise
1 tablespoon honey
3 tablespoons Asiago, feta, or goat cheese, crumbled or cut into small chunks
4 cups mixed salad greens

Preparation

In a medium-sized, non-stick pan, melt the butter over medium heat. Arrange the pear slices in the pan in a single layer. Cook for 3 minutes, and gently turn over the slices. Add the pecans to the pan and cook for another 3 minutes. Sprinkle the brown sugar over the pears and pecans, and mix lightly as the sugar melts. Remove from heat and set aside. Mix the yogurt, mayonnaise, and honey together in a small bowl. Arrange the salad greens on two plates. Top the greens with the warm pears and pecans and the cheese. Drizzle the dressing over the salads and serve. *Serves 2.*

CCMGA
Texas Cooperative Extension Office
825 N. MacDonald Street
Suite 150
McKinney, TX 75069

