



ECHO

Extension's Community Horticultural Outreach

OCTOBER 2003



Dear Friends,
I cannot tell you how proud I am of you! These past few weeks have been so encouraging for me due to the many compliments that I have received about you. Our involvement with the preparation and presentation of the Children's 1 Discovery Garden in Plano and the TAMU-Dallas Field Day event was greatly appreciated by many people. Lots of folks outside of our organization got a chance to see just how special this group is, and you made a great impression for the Collin County Master Gardeners and Texas Cooperative Extension.

Thanks for all you do,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Landry Lockett".

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.

**Next CCMGA
General Business Meeting—Election of Officers**

Thursday, October 23rd, noon

At the Heard

**DON'T MISS OUR ANNUAL SEED AND PLANT
EXCHANGE!**

Remaining Master Gardener Classes. . .

10/14/03	Plant Pathology	Ong
10/21/03	Texas Superstars and Landscape Design	George
10/27/03 (Monday)	Annuals & Perennials	McKenney
11/14/03	Fruit & Nut Trees	Begnaud
11/11/03	Plant Propagation and Texas Smartscape	Woodson
11/18/03	Composting	Master Composters
	Review/Role-play	Landry Lockett
	Explanation of Projects	Landry Lockett

Take these opportunities to refresh your memory and expand your knowledge on the topics listed above. Remember — we all have plenty of room to grow as Master Gardeners!

Little Hands on the Farm Workday—Friday, October 17

FYI: Landry has received the gate and parking passes for those who have signed up to help on October 17th for either the am or pm shifts. He will have them available for pickup on Tuesday, October 14th at the Coit Road Research and Extension Center at the MG classroom, or you may pick them up at the Extension Office in McKinney. Please call him if you have any questions. Carpooling would be appreciated where possible. Please wear your Master Gardener pin and arrange to arrive in plenty of time for orientation prior to your shift (8:30 for the am shift and 1:30 for the pm shift). Get Ready, get set, have fun!!!



It's time again for dues!

Susan Owens will be glad to receive your dues for 2004 anytime prior to January 1st. Please make your checks payable to the Collin County Master Gardeners Association in the amount of \$15.00 and send them to her or bring them to our meeting.

Get it out of the way early!



SEED EXCHANGE TIME!

By Diane Poston

Long ago our ancestors saved seed from year to year and generation to generation. Many of us have flowers and vegetables that our parents, grandparents and beyond have passed on through the years by seed. Saving seeds was a necessity at one time but now all we have to do is to open up a garden catalog, go on-line or step into any nursery or Wal-Mart and have a wonderful and diverse selection of seeds at our fingertips. But, isn't there always one or two or more plants that we admire in our friends garden or maybe a vegetable that was given to us that tasted especially good? By saving seeds and exchanging them with our friends, it is like having them with you in the garden all year. When you look at a beautiful blossom that is a result of a seed that Aunt Katy gave you, don't you remember her, picture her right there with you? We are coming up on our annual seed exchange again this year at our October meeting. This is a great meeting to share the bounty of your garden in tiny seed envelopes and cuttings, bulbs and pods. Below are a few tips and tricks to help you in your seed collecting, how to store them and some guidelines on passing them on to others in the group.

Seed Collecting Tips

Seeds are best when collected from good specimen plants that are vigorous and disease free. Picking the 'best of the best' insures that the seed will be more likely to produce a beautiful healthy seedlings and eventually a wonderful plant for your friends to enjoy the memory of you.

Many plants produce seeds, but not all of them come true or they may be sterile. You may have heard this or experienced this. Babying a seed from a tiny seedling to a blooming plant requires a lot of time and encouragement. A seed collected from a hybrid usually does not come true to the parent, or in other words, it's the ugly duckling offspring and the time and effort in raising it has been for naught. Many perennials, annuals and vegetables fall into this category. Before you collect seed from a favorite columbine or hibiscus, be sure that it is not a hybrid or the person that admires your plant may be in for a surprise next blooming season. Some plants like zucchini and squash may cross pollinate with each other. Bees and other pollinators travel from one plant to another and the result can be a squashinni!

The best time is whenever.....

For every flower there is a time, or is that for every season? The ideal time to collect seeds is, well, when they are ripe. Seeds need to be mature before they leave the plant. In most cases this is after the seed head or flower has turned brown and is dry. In some cases though, for example a fruiting plant like passion vine or tomato, it is when the fruit is ripe. If you wait for the fruit to turn brown, the seeds may be moldy or hard to separate from the fruit. For seeds that are formed in pods, the pods must be picked before they burst open. This can be tricky since some have an automatic timing mechanism that is triggered as soon as the seeds are ripe, so in this case timing is everything.

It is best to collect seeds on a dry day and certainly after the dew has evaporated. If this is not possible, be sure to dry the seeds very well before storing them in a container.

Capture the moment

There are many different ways to capture the seed but here are a few hints:

For fine seeds in dense seed heads such as rudebeckia, clip the stalk with the flower, trying not to disturb the flower head. Place a paper bag over the seed head and scrunch it up around the stalk. Shake the bag vigorously to loosen the seed then pour the seeds out onto a tray and lightly blow away any chaff and other seed debris. Seeds are usually heavier than the debris and can usually be blown away easily without loosing too many of the

Another method of collecting seed from seed heads would be to pull the seed heads through your hand into a waiting paper bag in the other hand.

Hanging mature seed heads or pods upside down and enclosed in a paper bag works well to capture seeds also.

For vegetables such as zucchini, squash and melon, pick the fruit when it is at its peak ripeness. Allowing the fruit to fully ripen or even slightly over ripen, insures that the seed will be mature. Slice it open and scoop out the seed. Remove the flesh from the seeds and allow to air dry.

Tomatoes are a whole different story. The tomato should also be picked when ripe and the seeds squeezed out into a small container such as a pint size storage container. The soft jelly like substance surrounding the seed is actually an anti-germinating substance that prevents the seed from germinating within the tomato. To remove this and separate non-viable seeds, add water and allow to set for a few days. This mixture will become nasty and moldy. After a few days, add some more water and stir. Allow to settle and skim off the top. Drain the liquid. The remaining seeds that have sunk are the good ones. Pour out onto a paper towel or dish and allow to air dry.

Tuck them away till next year

After you have collected your seeds, storing them is critical in keeping them viable for the next year. It is important that the seeds you are storing are completely dry before placing into containers. If the seeds are completely dry, storing them in an airtight container in a cool dry place is the best method. Remember, germination occurs when there is warmth, moisture and light. Storage requires just the opposite. Film canisters and jars with tight fitting lids are good. Using paper envelopes is an excellent way to store seeds if you place the envelopes in an airtight container. Desiccants such as silica jell packets are excellent for keeping moisture down to a minimum. Your cache of seeds will need to be kept in a dark cool place and what better place than your refrigerator? Many people have had success with freezing seeds, but some seeds will become damaged if frozen. Also the cell walls of the seeds can burst if thawed too quickly, so experiment with this method. Check your seeds periodically during storage to be sure there is no mold growing or excess moisture in the container.

Share your bounty with friends at our Seed Exchange on October 23rd!

Helpful Tips:

- When bringing your seeds and plants to the seed exchange, if possible place the seeds in individual envelopes or baggies to share with everyone. This way all will have a chance to pick up one envelope rather than a handful of seeds, much neater. Small inexpensive coin envelopes can be purchased from the office supply stores and are great for this purpose.
- Label the envelopes with the common or botanical name, both if you know them. If it is a plant that may come in different varieties or bloom colors, this information would be helpful to the recipient. If it is an unusual or rare plant or has special cultural requirements please provide as much information as possible on the envelope or on an informational sheet. Of course if it is a common plant, this information can be obtained easily on the internet or in many of the plant books we all have and will not be necessary to go into such details.

- We are very fortunate to have the space we use for our meetings provided for by the Heard and need to keep the debris down to a minimum. If bringing plants and plant material to the exchange, keep this in mind. Wet plants leak and can stain the carpet, therefore, please provide used plastic grocery bags for the people who will be taking your plants.

When you arrive at the seed exchange, place your seeds and plants in the designated areas along with any informational sheets you would like to include. We will be having a brief business meeting first and then the fun begins. Please do not take any seeds before the business meeting. After the business meeting the 'exchange' will begin. Remember, this is a social gathering of friends, not sale days at Filenes' Basement. Limit your take to 'one per customer' until everyone has had a chance to go around the room. If there are more seeds and plants left, feel free to then go back and take some more!

Remember in sharing your seeds you share a small part of yourself. Next time you are in your garden, remember all of your friends. They are there with you everyday. Treasure them and enjoy!

Additional information can be found at the following sites:

<http://csf.colorado.edu/perma/stse/plntspec.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/1329/LSseedsavg.htm>

<http://www.indiana.edu/~libwylie/seedTips.html>

<http://eesc.orst.edu/agcomwebfile/edmat/html/fs/fs220/fs220.html>

<http://www.mybackyard.com/current/60p1.htm>

<http://www.virtualseeds.com/seedsaving.html>

Books:

Saving Seeds by Marc Rogers

Seed to Seed by Suzanne Ashworth

How to Grow Native Plants by Jill Nokes

***Arrive up to thirty minutes early for the meeting, have time to place your items, sign in, and say hello to friends!**

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

By Helen Snyder

Please confirm all dates and times before you go.



The Heard Museum

1 Nature Place, McKinney

Clinics begin at 10 am and last approximately one hour; Call 972-562-5566 x 237 to register

November 15, 2003: Native Texas Trees - \$25 non-members

The Heard Museum is offering birthday parties for children (ages 4-10) on Saturdays and Sundays. Children will explore the natural world both inside and out with hands on activities, nature crafts, and more! Choose from several party themes:

- Nature Safari
- Feathered Friends
- Reptiles
- Nocturnal Animals
- Insects

Dallas Arboretum

November 8, 2003: Wild About Orchids: Learn all about orchid care and selection, tricks for long lasting blooms, how to repot and much more. Class participants will receive a 5" potted Phalaenopsis orchid to take home.

Time: 1:00 - 3:00

Member Price: \$36

Non-Member Price: \$40

December 3, 2003: Herbs of Christmas: Celebrate the season with a discussion on the herbs of Christmas.

Time: 9:30 - 11:30

Member Price: \$10

Non-Member Price: \$10

Fort Worth Botanic Garden

October 18: 10 – 12:00 p.m. Ft. Worth Nature Center (9601 Fossil Ridge Road) Naturalist-led Nature Hikes. Join a naturalist for a leisurely hike on the trails of the FWNC&R. Hikes feature current natural history events such as blooming wildflowers, insects, birds etc. Water and appropriate clothing suggested. \$5 Anne Bachelder 817/237-1111

October 24: 10:30 – 11:30: Preschool Discovery Club: We invite preschoolers, ages 3-5 and their adult companions to join us in discovering the exciting world of nature! Pre-registration required.

\$5 Anne Bachelder

817/237-1111

October 25: 9 – 12:00 p.m. Texas Tough Winter Colors: Get your garden ready for all those wintertime guests with this class that leaves the typical pansy/kale combo in the dirt. Learn to select premium winter color, then maximize its impact with texture foils, clever schemes, and fragrance! Instructor: Lisa Adams Grove \$35

Fort Worth Botanic Garden (Continued)

October 25: 9 – 12:00 p.m.: Begonias 101: Enter the enchanting world of begonias! Learn propagation and culture secrets in this fun hands-on class that gives you exclusive access to the Botanic Garden's renowned Begonia Species Bank. Students will perform several different propagation techniques, and every one gets to take their cuttings home! Linda Shires: instructor \$35 817/871-7686

October 27 thru Nov. 5: Landscaping with Native Plants: Introduction –a practical landscape design experience showcasing those tried and true native Texas plants! Create an original design for your own garden right in the class. Steven Chamblee: instructor \$95 817/871-7686

Plant Propagation Specialist Training, October 4-5, 2003, Montgomery County, Texas

My family doesn't understand how I can get so excited about propagating plants -- I'm kind of thrifty and try to be a good steward of our environment, so the concept speaks to my heart. I had the time of my life this past weekend at the Plant Propagation Specialist training hosted by Montgomery County.

The Montgomery County Master Gardeners opened their facility and their hearts to 30 Master Gardeners from 22 Counties. This was a carefully thought out training. The entire program is available as a Power Point presentation that can also be used in a demonstration board format. Interspersed were hands-on projects appropriate for various age and experience levels. I can see us using this for Junior Master Gardeners, Speakers Bureau, and other educational opportunities.

The program wasn't the only worthwhile experience this weekend. The opportunity to meet and develop friendships with other Master Gardeners and hear how they do things was inspiring. It never fails to amaze me how generous gardeners are.

I'm looking forward to sharing this program with you!

Beth DiGioia

P.S.: They really have their act together. With their many greenhouses and other facilities, they propagate almost daily and "create" most of the plants they sell in their spring plant sale (the past sale netted them \$30,000!).

Reminder: Volunteer hours for Master Gardener Certification of the 2002 Fall Class are due at the end of the month! Master Gardener volunteer and continuing education hours for recertification are due by the end of 2003. To be recertified Master Gardeners must have six hours of approved CE and 12 volunteer hours.

The Web Committee is currently developing the Projects section of our association's new Website.

CCMGA Committee Chairs are asked to look through photos that have been taken at their various projects and submit the very best to the Web Committee. Prints, slides or digital files are all acceptable. Please bring prints or slides to the next general meeting.

Please send digital files to Carolyn Skei at ctexaskei@earthlink.net after contacting her about the desired resolution. There is no need to bring or send dozens, since the Committee intends to narrow the selection to one, two or three per project. People photos -- with good light on faces -- will be much appreciated!

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

McKinney Make a Difference Day

Location: SPCA located on 8411 FM 720 just east of Custer Rd. (North of 121 and South of 380)

Contact: Helen Housley @ 972-562-1494 or ray_housley@msn.com

- Tuesday, October 21st, 8:00 a.m. meet at the SPCA to flag location of 83 trees.
- Friday, October 24th, a.m. (time to be determined) meet at the SPCA to tag trees and/or move trees to location where they are to be planted
- Saturday, October 25th, 7:30 a.m., meet at SPCA to assist volunteers, answer questions, and serve as needed.

Hoblitzelle Park, Plano: Arbor Day Celebration November 1, 10 a.m.—Information Table

Location: The park is in Plano between Legacy and Hedgcoxe, and east of Custer and west of Alma.

Contact: Renee Ferguson @ [\(972\) 359-9607](tel:9723599607) or rennybird@attbi.com

The focus will be on disseminating information about tree selection and planting, and our usual plethora of handouts that we take to most locations. An appropriate children's project could be included.



To all of you wonderful volunteers:

I really can't thank you enough for all of your help this past Saturday (Sept. 27) at the Opening Celebration of the Children's Gardens! The event was a huge success and all of you are a big part of the reason why.

I continue to receive emails from parents who brought children to the event, telling of how wonderful it was for their children. We had about 800 attendees. We gave out 560 tickets for the Scarecrow voting and 330 people voted. I received 176 filled out evaluations from children and adults. The kids had to list their favorite activity. Every single thing we had to offer was listed at least once in their own writing (including throwing mud balls!). The most popular events with the children were the dirt sundaes, bird-feeders, and planting of the liberty garden. Many children mentioned making seedballs and scarecrows, the bug display and stories in the garden. It seems everything was a hit!

Thanks for being a part of this event and opening the eyes of many children to the wonders of gardening and the natural world. You did a wonderful job at each of your roles, and each was essential to the overall success of the event. I'm really glad to be associated with each of you! - Heather

Heather Merchant



Dear Friends,

This is my favorite time of year in the garden! Everything is looking a little bit overgrown and messy, but bright and beautiful with color—just right for butterflies, insects, birds and other critters. My garden has survived another Texas summer and, for the most part, I have countered damaging insects and disease with an orderly schedule of care and well-timed prevention.

This is the time of year when I release the reins and watch the show! The red cascade rose is competing with the passion vine that reaches out to grab me every time I pass by. On either side of my tidy crushed granite path, cypress vine twists and curls this way and that, covering a conical rosemary and tangling with a purple hyacinth bean vine. The vine-covered rosemary looks like a small Christmas

tree already decorated with tiny scarlet lights!

As Master Gardeners we know that maintenance is key to a healthy garden, yet autumn begs us to stop, step back, and watch the magic of the season unfold. I have learned to relax and enjoy the show, savoring every new surprise until the first frost arrives. I take great joy in knowing that this year's show is better than last year's, and I will soon begin to do what I can to contribute to next year's crescendo. I also know and appreciate all that can come in between and give thanks.

Thank you all for being a part of Master Gardeners with me over the last few seasons. Sharing my love of gardening and nature—and human nature has been a remarkable experience. I think we have come a long way together, and I am sure the best is yet to come!

Nancy

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