

Henderson County Master Gardener

“The Inside Dirt”

Maypop to Fall Butterflies

Wayne Stafford

This spring the power company decided it needed to remove a large water oak tree in my back yard. The result was a stump 3 feet in diameter with roots above and below ground extending another 2 feet. My first thought was “dig it up,” but my better judgment was to “cover it up.”



My selection was a maypop vine, an East Texas native perennial, with the most beautiful flower I have ever seen. The added plus is a very fragrant smell. I was first introduced to the maypop as a small boy

exploring Lot Branch bottom, an area with the most varied selection of plants and animals found in East Texas. Since then I have found the proper name for the maypop is passionflower or more formally, *Passiflora incarnata*.

The vine's cover was a bit sparse as the plant developed its root system. As the year progressed a lush green enveloped the stump, and up to 10 or 12 of the beautiful flowers bloom each day. The flower buds appear along the vine, and begin to open in the morning to a flower up to 3 inches in diameter. About mid morning each bloom will be fully open revealing the flower that will only last one day. The buds will always keep coming though and there is a constant supply of flowers.

The name maypop comes from the small oblong fruit the plant produces. When mature the egg-like fruit will make

a loud “pop” when stepped on. Inside there will be a few small seeds. Planting the seeds may not be the best way to propagate the plant, since maypop seed take up to 1 year to germinate. Instead use softwood cutting from the vine for rooting by air-layering, or transplant select shoots from the underground roots that come up around the main plant. In some situations the maypop is invasive. In my situation all of the area around the plant is lawn that will be mowed each week. This will limit any chance for the plant to escape.

Spanish explorers in South America first discovered the passionflower. The complex flower has much religious symbolism attached to its parts. The flower itself is associated with the crucifixion. The ten petals represent the ten faithful apostles at the crucifixion time, the twelve disciples, less Judas who betrayed Christ and Peter who denied him. The five anthers represent Christ's wounds; the pistils the nails; the corona was the thorny crown. Some ledges say the three pistils represents the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The leaves of the passionflower resemble Roman spears and the tendrils their whips.

Passionflowers have several purported medical uses. Their leaves contain a natural sedative used as a remedy for nervousness and insomnia.

Passion vine has a very interesting property that both protects it from most insect predators and shows a wonderful natural adaptation. Cyanogenic glycosides naturally produced by the vine chemically protected the passion vine by discouraging most plant-eating insects from feeding on the foliage. However the larva of two specialized butterflies feed on only this plant. The Gulf Fritillary and the Zebra Longwing are two species of butterflies that use passionflowers as a host plant to lay their eggs and feed their larva. The larvae of these butterflies are able to eat the foliage, and not be affected by the cyanide that the plant produces.

The larva of the Gulf Fritillary is an orange and black, and the larva of the Zebra Longwing is white with black spots.

We have been watching our passionflower very closely for eggs and any sign of larva feeding on the plant. The fall season is customarily a time for high butterfly activity. We are looking forward to seeing the beautiful Gulf Fritillary, which is very abundant in this area. The Zebra Longwing is a species of butterfly that is much rarer in East Texas. Perhaps the passion vine will help attract them.

Protecting the Environment in Texas is Spelled, I-P-M

Rick Hirsch
County Extension Agent
Henderson County

IPM, integrated pest management, may require a major change in attitude about the way we manage pests and use pesticides, even around the home. Managing pests requires that we do more than read a pesticide label and apply the proper dose. IPM seeks to reduce reliance on pesticides by using a range of practices that do the job just as well or better.

IPM applies to all kinds of pests including those in homes, lawns, gardens, crops and even pests on animals. IPM for the yard and garden, for example, includes planting well adapted varieties that may naturally resist pests, keeping plants healthy and vigorous (and more resistant to insects and diseases), encouraging natural enemies of pests like lady bugs and spiders and, if necessary, using pesticides that are less toxic and break down quickly.

While IPM may be a new concept to many of us, it's old hat to people in agriculture, the industry that pioneered IPM in the United States. Working for decades with land-grant colleges like Texas A&M University, agencies of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and private agencies like the Texas Pest Management Association, farmers and agribusinesses have been developing IPM methods for practically every commodity.

IPM makes maximum use of conditions and methods that control pests naturally. Here are some examples of how IPM is used in agriculture to provide us with safe and inexpensive food and fiber.

In some of the earliest IPM practices, Texas cotton farmers in the 1920's and 1930's found that destroying cotton

stalks immediately after harvest cut down on boll weevil populations. This practice disrupted the life cycle of the weevils by taking away their food source. Other effective practices include scheduling planting and harvesting at times that avoid high pest populations and using fast maturing crops that have limited exposure to pest damage.

Pesticides are often essential parts of IPM strategies, but they are applied typically after field checks or other evidence indicates their use is necessary to prevent extensive crop damage. IPM has reduced pesticide use in some crops by as much as 70 percent. Many chemicals used today are designed to break down rapidly in the environment and target specific pests without harming "good" insects.

Research is making IPM easier to carry out, more effective and more reliable. This is important because IPM practices vary from place to place with differences in climate, growing conditions and soil types.

If the past is any indication, IPM is the future of effective pest control. IPM techniques are like a craftsman's box of tools. The more the craftsman learns, the more tools he adds to his collection. In the same way, the more that people learn about IPM, the more IPM tools they use.

The Traveling Topiary Yvonne Perano

At our May Master Gardener meeting Gwen McGlaun put together a delightful live demonstration on how to make ivy topiaries and I got a chance to make my first one that day. Shortly after that meeting I left on vacation flying to Virginia Beach on the Atlantic Ocean to visit a friend. We spent one very special day making topiaries for her newly-decorated living room and I taught her what I had learned so she could share it with her local friends.

Then I flew out to California to see my sister and used my new knowledge to rescue a topiary that was in severe distress on her back deck. (She reports that it is doing well and never looked so good.) Finally, I flew down to Capistrano Beach on the Pacific Ocean, and made two more topiaries, one for my friend there and one for a dear neighbor who had been under the weather.

By the end of my vacation I realized I had been able to share what Gwen taught me coast to coast with some of

the most precious people in my life. Instead of bringing home trinkets to remind me of my vacation I was able to leave behind something living and beautiful - taking home only the wonderful memories of time well spent with friends and family. My thanks to Gwen for making this magical vacation one I will never forget.

Tahitian Squash

Sally Keenan

In May H.S. Stevens, a gardening specialist who writes for the Dallas Morning News, wrote a piece on growing Tahitian squash for a gourmet treat. Now I have several neighbors of whom I am very fond, one is a gourmet cook and the other is a Master Gardener. So where am I going with all this foolishness.

Dotty, my gourmet cook friend, saw the article and decided we should try growing this squash. She contacted Seeds of Change in New Mexico to inquire about purchasing the seeds. They are at 1-888-762-7333 or www.seedsofchange.com. The next thing I knew I had a packet of squash seeds in my hands. Where in the world was I going to plant these seeds? I had already packed my vegetable garden with more plants than was appropriate.

Enter Jim. He had just finished clearing a new patch of garden and had loaded it with compost from the Neches Recycling Center. This was great stuff that they gave away free to Master Gardener's willing to come and get it. He had space available and was willing for me to plant some of my Tahitian squash seeds. I planted four hills of squash at one end of the bed and he planted watermelon and cantaloupe at the other.

All summer long we have had a race. My squash grew from one end of the garden and his melons grew at the other. By now they have more or less met in the middle. Oh what produce they have begotten. He has had lovely melons and now I have huge tan squash.

Over the last few weeks they have begun to ripen into long golden cylinders. Some of them must weigh between 5 and 10 pounds. How these squash got their name is something of a mystery. Their botanical name is *Cucurbita moschata* and may have come from Costa Rica.

Tahitian squash is purported to be the winter squash with the highest sugar content. It is great used in many recipes

calling for pumpkin or butternut squash. It can also be eaten raw grated into salad. My favorite recipe is to use it to make a curried squash soup, a truly delicious taste experience. Since these are very large squash the neat thing about them is if you start at the stem end you can cut off the amount of squash needed. The cut end will "heal" over. This can then be trimmed as the next section is used.

Of all the vegetables I tried this summer I have to say that the Tahitian squash was the most successful. The crop was excellent. I must say that I cannot take credit. All I did was plant the seed. In fairness it was Jim who prepared the bed and watered the plants through the long hot summer. I will share with Dotty now that the harvest is in.

Curried Tahitian Squash Soup

Sally Keenan

- 4 Tbsp. sweet butter
- 2 cups finely chopped onion
- 4-5 tsp. curry powder
- 4-5 cups Tahitian squash (3 lbs.), peeled and cubed
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 2 apples, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup apple juice
- salt & pepper to taste
- apples, unpeeled, grated

Melt butter, add onions and curry powder and simmer, covered, on a low heat for about 25 minutes. Add squash, stock and chopped apples. Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer for 25 minutes. Puree soup, add apple juice, season and reheat. Garnish with grated apple.

YIELD: 4-6 servings • PREPARATION TIME: 1¼ hours

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jennifer Mason

Do you know who provides the largest informal education system in the world? The Texas Cooperative Extension does through its 250 offices located within our state. Its mission is to provide quality relevant outreach and continuing education programs and services to the people of Texas.

The name of this educational organization fits its objectives. Extension was formed as a cooperative extension of the federal, state and county governments to respond to the needs of the people. In Texas the information offered by Extension is provided by scientists and researchers at Texas A&M and other universities, and it is made practical and relevant by Extension educators, or agents, who work in each county.

The focus of Extension falls into four categories:

Agricultural and Natural Resources which provides resources and education relevant to the agricultural community and its producers, information for the horticultural community and the home gardener, wildlife, forestry and natural resources.

Community Development provides resources and training on economic development ranging from funding opportunities to community planning.

Family and Consumer Sciences offers practical information for families: raising children, housing and environment, eating well, managing money, and staying healthy.

4H and Youth prepares youth to meet the challenges of childhood, adolescence and adulthood, through a coordinated, long-term, progressive series of educational experiences that enhance life skills and develop social, emotional, physical and cognitive competencies.

In Henderson County the Extension Service has partnered with many organizations and agencies including The Livestock Show, Chamber of Commerce, economic development organizations, curriculum enrichment of local school districts, Trinity Valley Community College and The United Way to name a few.

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Do you know what the largest volunteer program is that dedicates its time and talents to enhance quality of life for citizens in the community using the science of horticulture? The Texas Master Gardener Association is and as a volunteer of Extension I feel proud to be associated with a service that provides so much to the community.

Chimichurri Sauce

Carol Atfield

4 cloves garlic, peeled
2 cups packed fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 1/2 cups olive oil
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1-2 tablespoons oregano
1-2 tablespoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons salt
1/2 - 1 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper

Mince garlic in food processor. Add other ingredients and process until blended.

You should have two cups of sauce which, traditionally, can be served with beef.

It can also be set out for dipping with chips.

American Beautyberry

Sally Keenan

Callicarpa, Americana, American beautyberry is a late bloomer in many ways. It is a medium-sized shrub that puts out long arching branches during the growing season. The opposite leaves are serrated and ovate in shape. During the summer months small lilac to pink flowers appear in clustered haloes about the base of the leaves. These flowers though are not much to write home about. They are quite small and look like a bit of pink froth. But, ah, then comes fall and absolutely brilliant tight clusters of bright purple berries appear in place of the flowers. The color is so intensely clear and purple that it seems unreal at first. One commentator describes a branch of beautyberries as looking like purple shish kabobs.

Other names for the beautyberry include French mulberry, turkeyberry, or foxberry. The plant is native to the southeastern part of the United States. It is most commonly seen in oak woods, pinelands and scrubs.

It is not fussy about its habitat. It will grow in shady spots but some sun produces more berries. Thomas Jefferson, well known for his



enduring interest in botany, mentions the American beautyberry in a 1771 list of medium-sized shrubs at Monticello. He is known to have shared cuttings of the plant with his French friend the Comtesse de Tesse, aunt of the Marquis de Lafayette. I've rarely seen beautyberry bushes for sale commercially. This is really too bad. I obtained one for my garden at a plant swap among gardeners. I have planted it in a location where it can grow rather unnoticed among summer bloomers until it is ready to give forth its autumn splendor.

American beautyberry is a great plant to include in the landscape if you want to attract birds. Many of our favorite feathered friends including mockingbirds, robins, and cardinals find them quite tempting. Other animal species, raccoons, squirrels and possums, are also attracted to the purple berries during the fall and winter months.

Since the beautyberries are so rich in color and texture I thought they would be a wonderful addition to cut flower arrangements. I mentioned this to a friend recently. Her experience was that indeed they were beautiful in an arrangement but look out when the berries begin to fall. They tend to stain and the intense color is very difficult to get out of carpets or tablecloths. Perhaps they are best enjoyed in the wild.

The first time I remember seeing a beautyberry bush was several years ago during a field trip with the Henderson County Master Gardeners. It was a lovely fall day and we were out walking the nature trail at the East Texas Arboretum in Athens. The day's lecture was on East Texas trees but the sight burned into my imagination was the intense purple beautyberries. More recently on another fall trip Joe and I visited a ranch in Bohnam with some friends. Here beautyberry bushes had been planted liberally in the landscape and provided lovely texture and color to the naturalized landscape. These experiences are a reminder that each season brings with it beauty and color that is always surprising in its freshness.

An Update on Insect Repellents

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

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.

Remember Spring Always Follows Winter



Now is the time to select bulbs in order to be ready to plant for spring.

Henderson County Master Gardener

<http://agfacts.tamu.edu/D5/Henderso/hc-mg.htm>

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The Henderson County Master Gardener Association is sponsored by the Henderson County Cooperative Extension Service which is a part of the Texas A&M University System. Its objectives are to increase knowledge of gardening to its members and the general public, and to provide the community with information on good gardening practices.

If you have received this newsletter in error, or to provide us with a change of address, please contact the Henderson County Extension Office at (903)-675-6130.