

Henderson County Master Gardener

“The Inside Dirt”

5th Annual Master Gardener Spring Conference April 21, 2005 Yvonne Perano

Calling all gardeners and lovers of roses! The Henderson County Master Gardener Association is pleased to announce its Fifth Annual Spring Conference to be held Thursday, April 21, 2005 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Lakeview Lodge, 1801 Flatcreek Road in Athens. This year's conference promises to be an outstanding event featuring Dr. Steven George, Landscape Horticulture Specialist for Texas Cooperative Extension and creator, and national coordinator, of the Earthkind Environmental Landscape Management Program. Dr. George obtained a Bachelor of Science in Zoology and a Master of Science in Horticulture from OSU. He received a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from North Carolina State University. His presentation, "How Everyone Can Be Highly Successful With Easy-Care EarthKind Roses" will include details about the characteristics, maintenance and designation of these beautiful roses that have been proven to deliver outstanding landscape performance with minimal care. After years of extensive field research, during which no pesticides of any kind were applied, and little or no commercial fertilizer was used, only a few very special roses have received the prestigious EarthKind designation.

Doors will open at 6 p.m. and attendees will have an opportunity throughout the evening to bid for items in a silent auction, visit with vendor exhibitors, purchase a variety of plants, and ask local Master Gardeners their specific gardening questions. Dinner, provided by Danny's Barbecue, will be served at 6:30 p.m. followed by Dr. George's presentation. Be sure to stick around for the door prize drawings at the end of the evening.

Advance tickets are \$15 and are available from any Henderson County Master Gardener or the Henderson County Cooperative Extension Office. A limited number of \$20 tickets will be available at the door. For more information, or tickets, call the Extension Office at (903) 675-6130.

About Mushrooms in Texas Cecilia Bowles

Fungi are a kingdom separate from the plant kingdom, because they do not contain chlorophyll like green plants and therefore cannot make their own food. What we typically call mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of an organism that obtains its nutrients by breaking down organic matter (saprophytic), or obtains it directly from higher plants (parasitic or symbiotic). It has been estimated that as many as 8,000 to 10,000 species of fungi are to be found in Texas, but at present fewer than 1,000 have been identified. Thus, our state represents a fascinating challenge for the study of fungi, or mycology. And since Texas offers a number of ecological areas in which to search: the desert and semiarid areas of west Texas, the hill country with its alkaline soil, and the acidic soils in forested areas of East Texas, the amateur mushroom hunter could even make significant contributions to science, or just have fun identifying and collecting wild mushrooms.

While mushroom is a common term that is applied to the fruiting body of a fungus, usually one that has a distinct cap and stalk, it is often applied in a general way to the fruiting bodies of the larger fungi, even if they do not show typical cap and stalk features. The term toadstool refers more specifically to the mushroom with distinct cap and stalk, but some people use it to mean only poisonous mushrooms, while others use it as a general term for all mushrooms. The ambiguity makes toadstools an undesirable term to use.

The classification of fungi is based on how and where they produce their spores. The genus name is given to a group of mushrooms that have many similar characteristics and the species name is given to those mushrooms in the genus that are capable of mixing or interbreeding. This does not necessarily mean that all members of a species look exactly alike; all people are of the same genus and species – Homo sapiens, yet no two are identical and all are unique.

The presence of fungi has been known for thousands of years. The first hints of our mycological knowledge, relating to plant diseases, are recorded as far back as 1200B.C., and the effects of poisonous fungi were dealt with by Euripides in about 450 B.C. Even today, few people realize how their lives are bound up with the presence and activities of these organisms – including the production of wine, beer, bread, and the distillation of alcohol.

Fungi can be both a help and a hindrance in the slow but continual changes that take place in both nature and society. By virtue of their breaking down of organic matter, they help in decomposition, releasing nutrients which can be reused by green plants. However, they cause huge amounts of damage by destroying foodstuff, hides, skins, fabric, wood, books and artwork. In addition, the fungi are the cause of the majority of known plant diseases, as well as many diseases affecting animals and man.

Eating wild mushrooms can be a treat. However, the mushroom-eater must know exactly what is being eaten, as there can be adverse reactions to eating wild mushrooms. These can range from mild to serious respiratory symptoms, severe attacks of asthma, nausea and vomiting and ultimately irreversible damage to liver, kidney, and even death. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the mushroom hunter be able to identify the mushroom in question with the aid of a field guide and a mycologist to help you with your identification. Although the cultivation of mushrooms has evolved to a profitable industry, the cultivated species have never been the most prized by gourmets. The cultivated types are necessarily the ones that grow on decomposing matter, and prized species, such as amanita, and chanterelles, are the symbiotic types, which do not develop without the right symbiotic plant.

The references for this article are Texas Mushrooms by Susan Metzler and Van Metzler, Univ. of Tex. Press, 1992. The authors are active in the Texas Mycological Society, a nonprofit educational and social group whose purpose is to identify and enjoy mushrooms in our state. Also referenced is Guide to Mushrooms by Giovanni Pacioni, Simon and Schuster Pub., 1981.

A Gardener's Tale

Jim Stevenson

It's my belief that people gravitate towards those jobs they do well and shy away from those they don't. And I'm a good example. I have no problem with being HCMG's Treasurer and "keeper of the hours" for it's what I do well. It's all those other reasons we gather – growing things --- that I remain intimidated.

Well, not completely intimidated. I'm pretty good with grass (the kind you mow) and growing bushes and trees. I pot my annuals and can spell bougainvillea with the help of my wife – Brenda – the English teacher. I can mulch plants with the best of you and even stop tree trimmers on the highway and steer their mulch-filled trucks to my property.

But a real garden? Growing things you eat? That I left to Sally Keenan. But not this year. This year I take the plunge. I'm going to have a real garden. Not the garden I had last year. No sir. This time, when I plant my veggies, I'm not taking off to Europe for a month and telling my friends – "help yourself – and don't forget to water!"

This year, I'm really going to concentrate on my garden, doing all those things that every one of you already knows how to do and takes for granted. Yup, I'm going to cultivate, plant, water, fertilize, weed, nurture and, of course, curse. Oh yeah, and kill bugs. I figure if I'm really going to call myself a MG, I really should try to have a real garden.

So, with this article, the adventure begins. I'm going to keep you up-to-date on my veggie garden. OK, you can stop yawning. This is important – to me. I'm going to prove to all that if I can have a successful garden, anyone can.

I have already purchased nine tomato plants from Neil Poore. There is a purple one, a small red one and all the rest big red ones. I'll figure out later what they are actually called because sooner or later, some nosey neighbor is going to ask me and as luck will have it, I'll be wearing my MG hat. I guess I could always throw out terms like hybrid, heirloom, determinate and indeterminate, all beginning with the word "red" or "purple."

(see **Gardner's Tale** on Page 3)

A Word From the President

Jennifer Mason

Top 10 Reasons Why You Should Come to The Henderson County Master Gardener Association's Spring Conference?

10. You can have your personal plant questions answered by a Master Gardener.
9. This event is a great value.
8. It is on a Thursday night...where else are you going to go?
7. You will be able to purchase some good plants real cheap.
6. You will meet other people interested in gardening.
5. If your spouse wants to go and you attend you may get extra credit.
4. You will get to see the inside of Lakeview Lodge without having to dance.
3. You will learn about how and why you should become a Master Gardener.
2. It will be the perfect excuse to eat Danny's Barbecue even on a diet.

And the number 1 reason to attend The Henderson County Master Gardener Association's Spring Conference:

1. You will have the opportunity to learn about Earthkind Roses from the creator of the Earthkind Program!

Gardner's Tale

(continued from page 2)

Well. The ground has been tilled and stuff that Mother Nature wanted returned has been added to the dirt. Oops, I mean soil. By the time you read this, my plants will be in the ground, following Neil's instructions, and I shall be well on my way to growing edibles far more costly than anything you would buy at Wal-Mart. But hey, it's going to taste great, right?

Stay tuned for more installments of "A Gardener's Tale."

It's Easy to be Kind

Gwen Mc Glaun

Talk to any gardener and soon it will be evident that there are as many variations of gardening techniques as there are gardeners. All are striving to achieve the same end result: the healthiest, highest yielding garden or most beautiful landscape possible. However, many of those same

gardeners are using practices which are damaging not only to their landscapes, but to the very earth we all share.

Many enthusiastic gardeners overuse synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and other toxic chemicals, as well as one of our most precious natural resources, water. Their goal is to achieve faster more lush production. Unfortunately, not only are they not achieving the desired results, they are wasting money, time and precious resources as well.

Dr. Steve George, Extension Landscape Horticulture Specialist for the Texas Cooperative Extension Service and other Cooperative Extension Service horticulturists have developed a program called "Earth-Kind" gardening and landscaping. Their goal is to promote environmentally responsible gardening methods through scientifically proven techniques from the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping methods. Their gardening system maintains a steadfast reverence for our environment while providing easy maintenance.

Many familiar principles employed by the "Earth-Kind" program include good site selection, soil preparation, composting, mulching, and crop rotation. Selection and culture of plants play an important roll in avoiding pest problems. When pest problems do arise, the "Earth-Kind" gardener is encouraged to use pesticides only if all other methods have failed. They then select the most environmentally friendly product available.

Plant selection is such an integral part of the program that a side-branch called "Earth-Kind Roses" has been introduced. Roses given this designation exhibit high performance, require low maintenance, and are disease and insect resistant and tolerant. Currently eleven rose varieties have been so designated after extensive field trials in which they were planted in a heavy alkaline clay soil, in the full sun with no additives or amendments. Although the beds were mulched and drip irrigated, fertilizers, pesticides or fungicides were not used.

Scientific research has introduced a proven, effective system for gardeners to become more efficient as well as environmentally responsible. An environmental attitude adjustment is painless to acquire when so much less effort is required.

Learn more by visiting: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/earthkind/ekgarden.pdf>

Gardening

Gene Bennett

I spaded, I raked, I graded.	I waited.
I weeded, I seeded, I planted.	I waited.
I watered, I weeded, I pleaded.	I waited.
I fertilized, I watered, I visualized.	I waited.
I stooped, I knelt, I drooped.	I waited.
I watered, I watered, I watered.	I waited.
I weeded, I weeded, I weeded.	I waited.

GROW DAMMIT!!!!

Palms for Northeast Texas – Part 2

Carol Atfield

More About Cold-Hardiness

One of your primary considerations when selecting a palm for this area is how well adapted it is to cold weather. Frost becomes more damaging to palms as it extends its stay and is repeated. The simplest damage is burned leaf edges, but frost may affect whole leaves, parts of the trunk or crown. Crown damage is often fatal. Hardiness is also a matter of size; larger (and better established) palms may pass through several frosts unharmed while smaller ones perish.

Plant Palms Now!

Plant palms in well drained, fertile and slightly acidic soil when the soil temperature is below 65 degrees. Planting in mid-spring will give palms six or seven months to get established before the possibility of frost. Their planting hole should be the same depth as the pot, and 2-3 times wider – a wide shallow planting hole. Plant a little deeper in sand. Plant in spots that are protected from winter winds. The larger the palm you plant, the better its survival will be. The growing season begins when temperatures reach 80 degrees – May-June through September-October.

Additional Varieties to Consider

Needle Palm (*Rhaphidophyllum hystrix*) is a clumping, understory palm with many deep green leaves with silvery undersides. It can grow to approximately 10 feet high and wide, but more often to 5 feet by 5 feet. Large established specimens can tolerate short spells of 5 degrees below zero; new growth is damaged at 10 below. It grows best in light shade.

Dwarf Palmetto (*Sabal Minor*) has only one short trunk, so it appears to be clumping. Leaves vary from green to blue green, with usually six leaves per plant. It grows slowly to a mature size 4-5 feet high and wide. Dwarf palmetto prefers a moist sunny location and hot, humid summer weather. Established plants will suffer some leaf damage below ten degrees.

Mediterranean Fan Palm (*Chamaerops humilis*) is a small clumping fan palm with still leaves and spiny leaf stems which slowly grows to five feet by five feet in the South. Its hardiness in zone 8 is comparable to oleander, but it does not like cold wet winters. Plant in full sun to light shade, in well-drained soil. This is the only palm native to the Mediterranean mainland.

“Palm Factoid”: Not all plants that look like palms are palms. One non-palm that really does look a lot like a palm is the “sago palm” (*Cycas revoluta*). The “sago palm” is actually a **cycad**. Cycads are an ancient group of plants that are closely related to cone-bearing trees such as pine and spruce.

LEMON VERBENA BREAD

Nina Ellis

2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons butter (room temperature)
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons finely chopped lemon verbena leaves
2/3 cup milk

LEMON GLAZE

1 tablespoon lemon juice mixed with about ½ cup powdered sugar to make thin glaze

Preheat oven to 325 degrees

Grease and flour 8 x 4-inch loaf pan. Cream butter, add sugar gradually, beat until fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix in lemon rind, lemon juice and lemon verbena leaves. Add flour, baking powder and salt which have been sifted together, alternately with milk, mixing just until blended. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake 55 to 60 minutes. Let stand in pan 5 minutes. Turn out and slowly pour glaze over loaf. Delicious warm or cold.

Ideas to ID Your Garden

Yvonne Perano

It's difficult to remember the names of all the plants in your garden and even harder to remember where you've planted bulbs, or where to expect the re-emergence of dormant perennials. The ideally organized gardener might keep a journal with maps of their planting beds that include dates for planting, fertilizing, and pruning. This paragon of virtue might also take digital photos using the camera's date function to track bloom colors and times. For those of us who just don't have the time to be that organized, it is a useful practice to label plants as we put them into the ground, especially if we raise an abundance of perennials, need to keep track of multiple varieties of vegetables or like to sprinkle seeds here and there. A well-labeled garden is especially helpful in the spring when all the plants (including the weeds) tend to look alike. Here are a few suggestions for making and using inexpensive labels for your garden.

Popsickle Sticks and Melted Wax – The supplies can be purchased at any local hobby store. Use a permanent marker to write the names of your plants on the sticks, as well as the date of planting or transplanting. Then dip the sticks in hot wax to preserve them from fading.

Recycled Plastic and Metal Mini-blinds – You can pick these up at yard sales and one blind will make dozens of markers. Cut the blind into 6-8 inch strips with a point on one end to stick into the ground. Write the name of the plant in pencil, it will last longer than ink.

Aluminum Flashing and Holiday Light Stakes – Trace interesting shapes on the flashing and cut out the shape. Use a sharp object to 'emboss' the name of the plant on the marker. Attach the shape with a small piece of wire to a Christmas light stake (used to string lights along yards during the holidays.)

Copper Tubing and Sheets – Buy either at Home Depot or Lowes. Bend short lengths of copper electrical wire into a hook or spiral on one end and a tapered cut on the other end to stick into the ground. Cut shapes out of the copper sheets with tin snips. Use a sharp object to 'emboss' the name on the copper sheet and then punch a hole through the top of the sheet. Hang it from the hook on the copper tubing or attach it to the spiral with a piece of wire.

Clay Pot Shards - Use a waterproof, felt-tip marker to

write the names of individual plants on the potshards and spray them with a waterproof sealant.

Wood-burned Stakes – Cut stakes out of treated wood and use a wood-burning tool to write the name of the plant on the wood. Spray the stake with sealant to prevent decay.

Colored Golf Tees – Assign each plant a specific color and use tees to identify where you have planted bulbs, corms and rhizomes.

Disposable Aluminum Metal Baking Pans – Cut out strips of the aluminum, engrave the plant information onto the strip with a sharp object. Punch a hole into one end of the strip and attach it to the plant using a wire or plastic tie.

You can always use the plastic tags that come with the plants. If you just stick them into the ground they tend to fade, break or get blown away. Peggy Wyatt, a Master Gardener who lives in Anderson County, showed me a wonderful trick. When your soil is still loosened after planting, insert the tag into the ground near the plant so that only the very tip of the marker is above the ground. When you need to refresh your memory, you can unearth the marker. It is usually still in readable condition because it has not been exposed to as much sun and wind.

Taking the time to label your plants will save you time and money. When your friends visit, you can impress them with the beauty of your garden, and with your knowledge about your collection.

Illustrated Flora of East Texas

The first of two volumes of the *Illustrated Flora of East Texas* is nearing completion. This is a publication by the Botanical Research Institute of Texas and Austin College Center for Environmental Studies. It is the first fully illustrated document covering the flora in East Texas. Research includes studies of plants in 87 counties encompassing 60,000 square miles, an area roughly the size of the state of Georgia. The area is home to two thirds of all plants found in Texas. Volume I includes 1,060 species of native and naturalized ferns and similar plants, gymnosperms, and monocotyledons (grasses, sedges, etc.) known in East Texas.

For more information, contact Barney Lipscomb, head, BRIT Press, or Abra Alexander, program assistant: (817) 332-4441; fax ((817)332-4112, e-mail:sida@brit.org

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

Officers 2005

Jennifer Mason	President
Carol Atfield	Vice-President
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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.