Henderson County Master Gardener

"The Inside Dirt"

Palms for Northeast Texas - Part One

by Carol Atfield

Plant a juniper, a rosebush or a holly in your yard and your neighbors will think you're "landscaping". Plant a palm tree in your yard and your neighbors will think you're crazy. "Those things won't grow here" is an attitude that many palm enthusiasts have to live with unless they are in a coastal area.

The good news is that by choosing the right types of palms and following a few simple rules, growing palms in our area can be as easy as growing many other common landscape plants.

Some Myths About Palms

"Palms are tropical plants." The truth is that *most* palms are tropical and subtropical. But there are between 50 and 100 palm species that will take temperatures below 20 degrees F, and a few will handle below zero degrees F. "Palms are too delicate for ordinary landscapes." The truth is that palms are tough plants. In coastal areas, palms are often the only trees left standing after hurricanes. In Nagasaki, Japan, palms not at "ground zero" started into new growth a few weeks after the city was leveled. "Palms will make my yard look like Carmen Miranda's." Not unless you want it to look that way. Palms can be found in courtyard gardens in Savannah and Charleston, in somber temple gardens in China and Japan, in dozens of famous gardens in the British Isles, and many other kinds of gardens around the world. Palms are adaptable to any style of landscaping.

Why are some palms cold-hardy and others not?

All cold-hardy palms have a special adaptation that palms from warmer areas don't have. During freezing weather, palms face the same problem as a car engine. They need water to "run", that is to carry out photosynthesis and feed themselves, yet the water that they need is frozen. Cold-hardy palms solve this problem the same way antifreeze solves the problem for the car engine. They can "supercool" water inside their leaves, trunks and roots. The water stays in liquid form, even though the temperature of the leaf goes below freezing.

Some Palms Recommended For Our Area

Windmill Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) grows on a single trunk with about 20 fan-shaped leaves. Mature height is about 20 feet, growth rate moderate in light shade, can handle temperatures of -*5* degrees F.

Texas Sabal Palm (*Sabal Texana*) Slow growing, it is the only native palm to Texas. One of the most cold hardy it's trunk width is 12" with a height of 30 feet. Pindo Palm (*Butia capitata*) A feather palm with gray green fronds 6-8 feet long and a massive trunk, the Pindo can handle temperatures down to *5* degrees F. Reaches a height of 10-20 feet with a slow to moderate growth rate in full sun and well drained soil.

(Check our next newsletter for additional varieties and information about planting your palms this spring.)

Old Garden Rose I Have Grown Successfully

Nina Ellis

Over the past twenty years I have been planting old garden roses (also known as roses growing on their own roots) in my garden. They are not growing in beds but are scattered throughout the garden placed by their cultural needs. I have found the China roses as a class are particularly well suited to the growing conditions in the South (i.e. high humidity and high heat) although when we experienced a temperature close to zero some plants were damaged considerably. The Teas were less affected by the cold and suffered no die-back.

Chinas are twiggy, smooth-wooded , compact , short plants (three to four feet at maturity in the bush form) that seem to be in bloom constantly. The blooms are predominately red or white and have been in cultivation since the early 1800's. My favorites are: Old Blush

(see **ROSES** on page 3)

Integrated Pest Management & Beneficial Insects

Rick Hirsch
County Extension Agent
Henderson County

Many insects play a beneficial role for plants in the landscape. Honey bees and other pollinators are involved in the reproductive growth phase of plants and flowers. We are extremely dependent on this group of insects for the development of fruits and seeds. There are also a number of insect predators that can attack harmful pests in the landscape. Most gardeners prize ladybugs and the occasional preying mantis for their ability to devour pesty critters. However, there are also a number of parasitic wasps, as well as nematodes, that have beneficial attributes. Protecting these natural pest enemies is an important part of maintaining an "environmentally friendly" landscape.

There are approximately 30,000 insect species in Texas. Fortunately, fewer than 100 species are routine pests in vegetable gardens. Most insects found in gardens are either incidental or beneficial, contributing to pollination, the balance of nature, or recycling of organic matter. A garden with an abundant supply of insects actually is quite healthy and productive. However, insect pests can reduce the quantity or quality of the vegetables produced and may transmit plant diseases.

Identify the insects in your garden to determine if they are beneficial, incidental or pests. Learn to recognize the common insects in your area, especially the pests, and learn to recognize the type of damage associated with pests. Consider using control measures when insects threaten the garden.

Insect pests can enter vegetable gardens by walking or flying. Flight allows many insects to have great mobility and their movement in large numbers is possible. Also, certain pests, like aphids and mites, reproduce about once a week under good conditions and their populations can increase rapidly. When pests seem to appear in large numbers almost overnight, they have either moved in or are rapidly reproducing.

As insects grow, they change in size and shape. This process is called metamorphosis. Some insects damage plants in both the immature and adult stages. Because insects change, they may be difficult to identify, and the type of damage they cause also may change. Young caterpillars may barely scrape the surface of a leaf when feeding, while the same caterpillar may eat great chunks of leaves when mature.

An insect's mouthparts can be a key to understanding the type of damage caused by a pest. Insects with sucking mouthparts feed by piercing leaves or fruit. Damage appears as pock marks or mottled leaves. Insects with chewing mouthparts chew holes in plants. If you can recognize the type of feeding, you can select the proper insecticides (i.e., stomach poisons for chewing insects).

When planting a vegetable garden, anticipate the pests that may occur during the year. Consider all management practices that will help deal with the pests before they become problems. Then, develop a management plan and put it into use before problems occur. Use your past experience as a guide in anticipating pests for the upcoming season.

Integrated pest management, IPM, is a philosophy of managing pests using multiple control techniques. IPM balances the goals of economic production and environmental stewardship when implementing control practices. IPM is the overriding strategy for most of agricultural production today and is rapidly being adopted in home gardening as well.

Monitoring or scouting crops for the presence and abundance of pests is an important part of IPM. Most IPM programs reserve the use of insecticides for situations when the pest is present in large numbers and the cost of return on the investment in control practices can be justified.

Many specific insect control practices can be implemented as part of an IPM program; generally the use of insecticides is included as a control option. When alternative control practices are substituted for insecticides, the IPM approach is similar to organic gardening.

A Word From the President

Jennifer Mason

What does it take to be a Master Gardener and what exactly do you guys do? These are questions that all Master Gardeners hear, typically followed by the next question- can you get a group to come out to my place and do some work?

Becoming a Master Gardener does take a great deal of dedication. Each fall the Henderson County Cooperative Extension Service, in collaboration with Trinity Valley Community College offers a class designed to introduce potential Master Gardeners to all aspects of horticulture. Students may take this class on a credit basis or through the Continuing Education Department. The class meets Tuesday and Thursday mornings in the fall semester. Once the 70 hour Master Gardener Training Program is completed applicants are further required to complete 50 hours of volunteer service on approved projects during their year long internship.

So, how have Master Gardeners done in Henderson County? Since its inception in 2000 the program has grown by leaps and bounds. There are currently 34 active members and 11 interns. Although the program is small and new, that does not mean that the program is not actively contributing to our community. Last year, through volunteer hours, members generated an economic impact exceeding $21,000 to Henderson County.

Since 2000, the Henderson County Master Gardener Association has established the following projects within our community to extend Texas Cooperative Extension Service's education programs by dedicating time and talents to improving and beautifying through the science and art of horticulture:

- "The Inside Dirt" is our quarterly newsletter mailed to interested members of our community covering topics of horticultural interest in our region.
- Every spring Master Gardeners answer gardening questions via the telephone at the Extension Office.
- Master Gardeners in a partnership with The Senior Citizens Center, assist in maintaining the facility's gardens.
- The Henderson County Master Gardeners have adopted a portion of Highway 59 in an attempt to clean up behind individuals that Mess with Texas.
- The association has formed a relationship with The East Texas Arboretum. Currently we assist with their educational programs, horticultural programs and design and maintain the Heritage Vegetable and Herb Gardens.
- In the summer months we run The Little Sprouts Program. Little Sprouts is an educational day camp based on The Junior Master Gardener Program's curriculum and offered by Trinity Valley Community College.
- Finally, we hold an annual Spring Conference open to all members of the community. The admission covers the cost of the catered meal. We invite gardening based vendors from the community to set up booths, we hold a plant silent auction and have renowned speakers do presentations on subjects of interests to all gardeners.

As we continue to grow and bloom we only hope that you begin to see how Master Gardeners are dedicating their time and talents to educate, improve and beautify our community. Although we are not in your backyard we are in your community.

Roses

(continued from page 1)

(climbing or bush form, with semi-double pink blossoms), Cramoisi Superior (climbing or bush form, semi-double red blossoms), and Mutabilis (known as the butterfly rose) single blossoms start light yellow, change to pink then to crimson as they fade.

Teas are generally more robust shrubs than Chinas although similar in style. Their scent is similar to tea leaves, hence the name. The Teas are the foundation of our modern hybrid tea roses. In my garden they are vigorous growers reaching a height of five feet and equally as wide. Their colors range from light yellow to pink, copper and apricot. You will see Duchesse de Brabant with shell-pink globular blossoms, Georgetown Tea with very large peachy blossoms (a found rose as the name implies), J.E. Murphy's Pink Tea (found) blossoms are deep pink with many petals, Monsieur Tillier with very fragrant quartered pink to apricot blossoms, and Safrano that is nearly always in bloom with soft apricot blossoms.

The Teas as a class have been in gardens since the mid-1800's.

The class Polyanthas were bred in the 1930's, combining the characteristics of the Teas and Chinas with cluster blooming species roses. In this class my favorites are Marie Daly (a Greg Grant introduction) growing three feet by three feet with double light pink blossoms, LaMarne, a tall growing upright shrub (may reach five feet if not pruned) with deep pink blossoms. It seems as though this rose is never out of bloom. Clotilde Soupert with very round, very double pale pink blossoms. The one problem with this rose is its tendency to "ball" in wet weather. This is not a problem for me as the constant supply of buds make up for the loss. Perle D'Or is a tough Tea-Polyantha cross that is a vigorous grower and bloomer with soft pink, double elegant blossoms.

If you are seeking rose show perfect long-stemmed buds, these roses are not for you. However, if you want color, ease of culture and a delicious fragrance perfuming the air as you work in your garden, these roses are for you!

To quote Greg Grant the phrase to remember at the rose nursery is "Polly wants all the Teas in China" and you will not go wrong in making selections that will do well in East Texas.

As a bonus to you I will confess that roses are NEVER sprayed in my garden, fertilized with an organic product in the spring and fall, kept well-mulched and watered once a month during the summer months. Talk about easy-care! As a class my old roses return more joy to me for my effort in nurturing them than any other plants in my garden.

What-a-berry?

Annette Trammell

Many of us, particularly native East Texans, are familiar with what we call huckleberries. The fruit is somewhat "puckery" but a lot of kids were accustomed to eating them in late summer or early fall.

The small tree is actually a farkleberry. The *Dallas Morning News* writer, Frank Tolbert, gave the farkleberry (and a few other things) its notoriety in that publication. He also had a new species of Guatemalan berry, the tolbertianum, named for him

Floyd Blount of Athens has successfully grafted farkleberries with the rabbiteye blueberries. He reports that it makes an excellent rootstock. The flavor is just as good as the parent plant. The homebell was grafted onto the farkleberry successfully and is now over seven feet tall and producing good fruit that is large and flavorful with berries ripening a little earlier than the parent plant.

The actual huckleberry is very short with resinous leaves, and fruit with ten large seeds. It is not suitable for eating.

Farkleberry, huckleberry, or even sparkleberry, whatever it is called, I still enjoy picking and eating the little black berries.

Promises of Spring

Photos by Sally Keenan

Early Bloomers Defying Frost

A Cedar Waxwing Harvesting Berries

STAGHORN FERN PROPAGATION AND CARE

Yvonne Perano

Seven years ago I acquired a small staghorn fern planted in a hanging 6” square wooden box filled with sphagnum peat moss and charcoal. This epiphyte (requiring no soil for growth) is considered a slow-growing plant, but things have a way of growing bigger in Texas! I gave it no special care – just hung it in an oak tree each spring, sprinkled it with a little Osmocote in June and let the lawn’s irrigation system water it each morning. It has rewarded me by growing to almost 5’ in diameter with a center the size of a medicine ball. In the fall, when the temperatures drop, I would take it into my little greenhouse where the temperature usually remained in the low 50’s even on the coldest days; but this year it had grown just too large. I reluctantly loaded it into the trunk of my car and drove it over to the TVCC greenhouse where it now hangs in all its glory, lovingly cared for by a doting Mrs. Anderson, the TVCC greenhouse’s godmother.

Mrs. Lattie Anderson has probably forgotten more about plants than I will ever learn in my lifetime. My passion is propagation, and she is a wonderful teacher. We decided to propagate the staghorn, (a first for both of us) and I promised to do some research to make sure we didn’t injure the mother plant. I’d like to share what I’ve learned with you.

The green or brown paper-like layers of the plant are called a “shield.” New plants (pups) will emerge from the sides of the shield. Separating a pup from the mother plant is the easiest and fastest way to propagate a new staghorn. Simply take a sharp, sterilized kitchen knife and cut out the young plants when the pup form a mound 4" across. Leave about a 2" circle of plant material on each pup. Fill the hole in the mother plant with sphagnum peat moss. Pot the pups in orchid substrate mixed with sphagnum moss and a dash of charcoal to keep it fresh.

You can also board mount a pup by tapping nails into a piece of wood in a circular pattern slightly larger than the pup base. Place a generous amount of pre-soaked sphagnum peat moss inside the circle of nails and lay the plant in position on top of the mound. Tie a length of dental floss, fishing line or nylon string to one of the nails and wind the string back and forth around the nails, creating a "spider web" that fastens the plant to the board. Eventually the plant will grow over the supports, hiding them from view and further securing it to the board.

Below are three other methods used for planting staghorn fern pups: wire basket; terra-cotta pot with side cut out; standard potting.

Front View Side View

Staghorn ferns are relatively easy to care for.

Water Requirements: Water freely during the growing season and sparingly in winter. Mist daily in dry environments. If your plant is mounted on a board you can soak the plant in the sink or a bucket to water.

Light: Filtered sunlight is best. Avoid direct, hot sun. Remember that these plants often grow in trees where light is filtered by the leaves and branches of the tree.

Temperature: Best between 60ºF - 80º F. Winter temperature should not fall below 45º F.

Nutritional Requirements: Use time-released fertilizer or feed monthly with a balanced liquid fertilizer. Mounted Staghorns can be soaked in a bucket of fertilizer water.

I hope you will have the opportunity to bring one of these wonderful plants into your collection. They are truly magnificent specimens that will bring you many years of enjoyment.

Henderson County Master Gardener

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

Officers 2005

Jennifer Mason	**President**
Carol Atfield	**Vice-President**
Sally Keenan	**Secretary**
Jim Stevenson	**Treasurer**
Bonnie Dill	**Historian**

Henderson County
Master Gardeners Association
101 East Tyler Street
Athens, TX 75751-2547
Phone: 903-675-6130
Fax: 903-677-7222

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.