

Henderson County Master Gardener

“The Inside Dirt”

Vines Untangled

Wayne Stafford

With so many new trellis and arches that are easy to install and durable vines in the landscape have a new meaning to me. I have considered a number of new plants that have wonderful color and blossoms. Vining plants certainly should be considered in your landscape plans both for functional and aesthetic purposes.

Mandevilla, *Mandevilla splendens*, though a tropical plant works very well as an annual on a trellis. It produces beautiful foliage and blooms. After the danger of frost has past a containerized plant can go outside or planted directly into the soil. All summer and fall it will grow and thrive producing fragrant blooms. Before the first freeze bring the container of Mandevilla inside to over winter.



Clematis, *Clematis hybrida*, come in a variety of colors, sizes and shapes. Even after the bloom is spent it remains an attractive seed head that is lovely in floral arrangements. After blooming clematis needs a dormant period so the flowers will come and go during the season. The beauty of the flower will be worth the wait.



Purple hyacinth bean vine, *Lablab purpurea*, is a big vine that produces large purple bean pods that demanding your attention. The foliage is a deep purplish green. This vine loves the heat and humidity, and is a legume that fixes it's own nitrogen.

Spanish flag, *Ipomoea lobata*, is a small vine that is difficult to find. It is so unusual and beautiful it is worth searching it out.

Spanish flag is easy to grow reaching 15 to 20 feet in a single season. Flowers form on forked spikes and its colors range from cream to red as it unfurls giving it the name Spanish flag.



Nasturtium, *Tropaeolum*

majus, is a vine that can be bushy or trailing. A bonus to its beauty is that its colorful flowers are edible. The leaves look much like a lily pad. It is worthy to try in your garden either in the ground or trailing from a hanging basket.

Black-eyed Susan Vine, *Thunbergia alata*, is an African vine with orange, yellow, or white petals surrounding a large black center. The dominant central “eye” is where this beautiful plant gets the name.

With so many wonderful choices you need to try at least one. It will add color and beauty to your garden. For more on vines a good resource is the Clemson University web site at:
<http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/HGIC1101.htm>.

The School Garden

Jane Fox

The first book my daughter actually read herself was The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss. In the book a little boy plants a carrot seed and everyone tells him, “It won’t come up.” But the little boy does all the right things, and on the final page of the book a carrot comes up.....just as he knew it would.

The joy of planting and watching little seeds come up begins at a very early age. With so much emphasis placed on physical fitness and nutrition what better way to introduce values than to let our children plant “the carrot seed.” This can be done in a school garden. Lessons can

be taught through class gardens including math, English and nutrition.

So, how does one go about starting a school garden? There are some simple ABC's to any garden and gardening for children is no different.

Step 1: Get organized! There is not a teacher around who has extra time to take a leadership position. Your job is to create enthusiasm and gather a group of motivated people to help establish clear goals for a school garden. Your team should determine the length of time to meet your goals, the tools needed and the cost of the project. Remember that community support can be found but you have to ask!

Step 2: Dig in! Look at the garden through the eyes of a child, but with the wisdom of an adult. You must have easy access to water, to a minimum of six hours of full sun, to classrooms, and to ways to protect against vandalism. When designing, keep an open mind and maintain an adventurous attitude. Try not to get bogged down in the details. Don't forget a place for a compost pile, a tool shed and/or classroom meeting area

If you are planting a vegetable garden, pay close attention to harvest timing. Use plants that will produce by the end of the semester. Try to find as many discounted and donated plants and tools as possible. Check out what nursery and seed companies have to offer. You may also need soil amendments and fertilizers for your plot.

When planting let everyone enjoy the soil. The soil gives the children its own reward. Nothing is better than a lesson that lets you get dirty! Take pictures every step of the way. Use the pictures for writing lessons, invitations to special events, and an opportunity for bragging!

Don't forget that the compost pile is an important part of your garden. The recipe for a compost pile is easy. The ingredients are air, water, brown stuff, and green stuff. Brown stuff is dead, dried plant parts like leaves and pine needles. Brown stuff is high in the element carbon. Green stuff is fresh organic material like grass clippings, kitchen vegetable scraps, weeds and other plants. Green stuff is high in the element nitrogen. Don't use meat or milk products because animals especially rodents may be attracted to them.

Step 3: Maintain your garden. Since you have been wise in planning and have not overwhelmed your students *with* more garden than they can care for, it is important to maintain the momentum you had when you started. Keep your lessons fun and include students in decision making. Remember to add to and use that compost pile. A garden only needs to nurture wonder and imagination in students and allow time for learning and exploration. The possibilities for your garden are endless and are limited only by your creativity. You will be making children good stewards of the land.

Rabbit Wars

David McDowell

Our land has always had its share of rabbits. Their cuteness has always outweighed their ferocious appetite until this year. The herd ate all of my father's sweet potato plant tops. He stood all he could stand, and couldn't stand any more. He borrowed our neighbor's safe animal trap, and baited it with the last of the sweet potato tops. One was trapped, but when I pled for leniency for the cute bunny he freed it.

Instead of trapping the critters I protected the plants. First I cut the bottoms out of plastic pots, and then cut air vents into the sides. I covered the plant stubs with the barrier. It worked! As the plants got bigger, I replaced the pots with boxes that I got from the store. Having cut out the tops and bottoms I cut air vents in the sides. The barrier was now ready to go around the plants. This all seems to be working well.

The second assault came to the okra plants. I would check the garden, and find that the rabbits had chewed through the stems. They would not eat the plant or the stem. They just cut down the plant. There would be a stem and the wilted plant beside it. Every day we lost two or more plants.

I got paper grocery sacks, and cut them into sheets. Rolling the paper around a broom handle I made paper tubes. The tubes were 4 or 5 layers thick. Nurseries sell paper rolls to put onto the trunks of your trees for this same purpose. I found I could make my own for free. Since placing the paper tubes around the stems of the plants we have not lost one plant.

(See **Rabbit Wars** pg. 3)

A Word From the President

Sharon Barrett

Gardeners are the eternal optimists. We're always looking for the next new plant; tilling the next garden spot; searching the newest seed catalog; making plans for the next season. Next year can always be better than this year.

As Master Gardeners, the organization, it is time for us also to be making plans for the future. In just a few months we'll be seeking nominees for next year's executive committee; leaders to make us better than we have been before.

Our group has always been blessed with talent and willingness but this year we have such an abundance and diversity of talent and ideas and energy that there should be no difficulty in finding leadership. There will be new challenges and opportunities. Each year our conference has grown and now must have more advanced planning. We've added new educational opportunities which require additional planning and organization. Our larger numbers bring more diverse ideas which must be managed in a team effort. Our obligation is to Texas Cooperative Extension and to horticultural education for the public, yet we must continue to keep ourselves challenged and updated with educational and enjoyable experiences as well. It is a busy time.

We will need a new plan, new seed, new visions and new energy. It can't happen without you. I encourage our members to take a few moments to jot down some notes about where we are. What do you like about us? What would you like to see changed? What barriers can we overcome? Should we focus on growth or on maintaining what we do? What can you contribute to the vision you have of us? Read the officer descriptions in our bylaws and consider whether you might fit a position or volunteer for a committee. Give it some thought over the next few months. There's still time; the current committee still has work to do.

Be a part of the next wave of the evolution and we will become better because gardeners are the eternal optimists.

Rabbit Wars (continued)

If you could speak rabbit you could just tell them to leave

your plants alone. Since you probably can't choosing critter friendly methods is an alternative. We can have our plants and keep the eco-system in balance all at the same time. The trick is to identify the problem properly by observation. Then by using the giant brains that have been granted to us we can find safe ways to counter problems that Nature puts along our garden path. Good luck, and I hope that you are winning the rabbit wars.

Poppies And Other Simple Pleasures

Sharon Barrett

Those of my friends who know me best have probably recognized a recurring theme in my conversation and activities. It seems I am always heavily involved in a project which will help to simplify my life. Simplification is always my goal yet I go to great lengths to achieve it. Is the simple life worth all this? Spring brought validation that it is.

The past few seasons have found me busy building new gardens, enriching them and constantly changing and moving them as I try to determine how best to use them. One of those efforts has been to grow, as my grandmother did, those simplest of flowers, brilliant orange poppies. I've sown seed to no avail; I've transplanted only to have 1 inch blossoms on six inch stems. I've envied those lovely blossoms in my friend's gardens and public gardens as well as nursery centers and even roadsides. And this year I gave up. I gathered all the seed I had treasured (I never plant it all just in case) into one basket and decided there was no point in holding on to them any longer. Into the basket went the packets from Jean's mom, from Bonnie, from Gwen, from Nina. All of them. One day in the fall I went out and flung every one of them across the weediest, most non-productive patch of garden I have and ritually released my need for beautiful poppies. I released them to the earth which would not nurture them and from my guilt of having them sit on the shelf in anticipation. I would not try to grow poppies ever again.

I wrestled with what I should do with the patch of garden in early spring yet did nothing as I watched the vetch grow tall within it. I would clean it out in early summer. April came and with it that lovely Easter snow. But what was that bright spot in the snow as I peered out the window? And there was another and another! I was ecstatic as I

realized I had about a dozen brilliant orange poppies encased in little white flakes and felt that at last I had success. As the weeks wore on more poppies appeared, and more and more until I was greeted every morning by hundreds of orange and red bobbing heads as I left for work. From early April until the second week of June the little vetch filled patch had a cap of orange.

In the end, the release of my neediness, my plans and my toil brought what my years of planning and effort did not. And so it is with gardens and gardeners. I treasure the simple pleasures of poppies and friends.

Drought Tree Damage Can Be Dangerous Charles Spann

Drought damage to trees can be dangerous to an owner's property and safety especially when large trees are affected. Large portions of an apparently live tree may break. Even the trunk or root system may be damaged and become a hazard to structures and to humans.

If you have large trees close to buildings or walkways you should look for signs of weakness and remove trees that cannot be rendered safe. Be an informed consumer if you are selecting a replacement tree, for a large tree that needs to be removed. For example the Texas red oak and the bur oak have been shown by research to be appropriate tree varieties that thrive in our Henderson County soil and climate.

The recent droughts in Henderson County have severely damaged the root structure of many large trees. Severely damaged roots cannot send the appropriate amounts of nutrients to the tree. High crown areas are especially vulnerable. Without adequate nutrients the tree is vulnerable to disease and rot that can compromise the structural stability of the tree. A large tree many need to be removed if a significant portion of the crown is dead, or if it shows noticeably weak vigor in the leaves or branches.

Hypoxylon canker is a fungus disease that is denoted by smooth discolored areas in the typically rough bark on tree trunks. The discolored areas have a grayish color and soot-like texture. Native blackjack oaks have displayed a significant susceptibility to the canker after our recent Henderson County droughts. Blackjack oaks with obvious canker should be taken down. All debris from the tree

should be burned or buried. Do not store the wood for firewood as it could spread the canker to other trees. Canker-infected blackjacks seldom recover, and their upper portions frequently become most unstable. It is better to take down a seriously infected tree and replace it now with a healthy new tree that is suitable for our Henderson County soils and climate. A web site describing the canker is: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/county/smith/Homegardens/hypoxylon.html>

Fruit Trees Rich Hirsch County Extension Agent Henderson County

Healthy fruit trees are better able to survive insect and disease damage than plants already stressed by cultural problems. Optimum tree growth is maintained by following a well-balanced fertility program, selecting adapted disease-resistant varieties, and irrigating and pruning as needed.

Clean-up and residue disposal are important in reducing plum curculio, hickory shuckworm, brown rot of peach and pecan scab. Diseased material that is properly composted can be recycled as mulch or organic material.

Before using any pesticide, carefully read all instructions on the container. Wear protective clothing during mixing or spraying, and follow the instructions. Mix pesticides in a well-ventilated area or outdoors. Avoid chemical contact with the skin and do not breathe chemical vapors. Prepare only the amount required for one application.

Take necessary precautions when applying pesticides to avoid chemical exposure. Apply pesticides at the proper rate. Using less chemical than prescribed may result in poor control, while using more than recommended may result in excessive residue on the fruit or in plant damage.

A number of different sprayers can be used to apply insecticides and fungicides. Compressed air sprayers range in size from 1 to 10 gallons; because of cost and handling ease, most homeowners prefer the 2½ to 3 gallon sizes. Hose-on sprayers are less expensive but require a high volume of water, moderate pressure and a convenient water outlet. Applying wettable powders with a hose-on

sprayer is difficult.

Once a sprayer has been used it is considered a used pesticide container and requires proper handling and storage. Proper cleaning prolongs its life. Do not apply insecticides and fungicides with a sprayer previously used to apply herbicides; this may cause plant damage. It is best to have at least two sprayers; one for "herbicides" and the other for "insecticides to avoid contamination.

Store chemicals in a secure area away from pets and children. Properly dispose of any unused, diluted sprays and empty pesticide containers. Store pesticides in original containers.

Bulbs and Branches

**Free Educational Workshop
Presented by
HC Master Gardeners**

**September 15, 2007
East Texas Arboretum**

**Registration begins
9:00am**



Guest Speakers:

**9:15 am - 10:15 am
Chris Wiesinger,
President/Owner of
The Southern Bulb Co.**

**10:45 am - 11:45 am
Matt Grubisich, Regional
Urban Forester with the
Texas Forest Service**